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GST INCLUSIVE

CAN SYDNEY SEE A GRAND-FINAL?

By Peter Damalas

If ever Australian soccer was in need of a good advertisement for the game, now was the time for it to appear.

The second week of the 2003/04 Homeart finals series produced excitement plus, with 13 goals scored over the three games.

The quality of the teams in the top six and the football produced have been outstanding, and potential investors in a new Australian Premier League competition should consider these three matches as an indication of the sport's possibilities.

Perth Glory and Parramatta Power, the top two sides in the country, dished out an all-action major semi final for the 6,000 spectators at Parramatta Stadium, with the home side coming out on top 4-2.

The result may well be enough to ensure a grand final in Sydney for the first time in three years. In 2001, Wollongong Wolves earned the hosting rights and played South Melbourne at Parramatta Stadium, and a draw or a loss by one goal will mean the final NSL match will be held at this venue.

Parramatta have good reason to be confident, as they have had tremendous success in dismantling the tough Perth defence, and an early goal will further swing the tie in their favour.

Meanwhile, South Melbourne returned to winning ways when it mattered most, ending Marconi Stallions' fine run with a 2-0 win.

Sixth placed Brisbane Strikers can hold their heads high after a spirited comeback on Saturday evening, which saw them eliminated on away goals after winning 4-1, while Adelaide will host next weekend's minor semi-final against South Melbourne hoping that home support will restore their battered confidence.

In the match of the season, Perth recovered from a first half battering to score two crucial away goals. The calibre of both Power and Glory was evident, as they created a plethora of chances- the match was based almost entirely around goalmouth action.

Parramatta captain Alvin Ceccoli launched a thunderous free kick into the back of the net after only eight minutes, while Sasho Petrovski, on for the bruised Fernando Rech, managed to bypass defender Jade North and strike the ball low and hard past Petkovic.

The powerful striker changed the style of the football with his direct approach.

The goal of the game was undoubtedly Peter Zorbas' stunning long range shot moments before half-time. Petrovski did well to receive the ball in a deep position, hold up play and wait for the onrushing Zorbas, who sent the home crowd into raptures.

Perth coach Mich D'Avray took a calculated risk at half-time, bringing on striker Nick Mrdja and speedy winger Adrian Caçeres.

The move paid handsome dividends, with Bobby Despotovski scoring immediately from the resumption of play.

Ten minutes later, a powerful near post header by Jamie Harnwell made the score 3-2, and the tie was turned on its head.

It was left to NSL leading scorer Ante Milicic to again bring the house down with a long range goal of his own with fifteen minutes remaining.

The battle royale will resume with the minor premiers two goals down, but confident that their passionate supporters can carry them through to a third successive grand final in the west. A low scoring two-nil win will do the trick.

South Melbourne have striker Michael Curcija to thank for their progression past the first elimination stage, as his two goals ended the brave campaign of Marconi.

In the battle between the final two foundation members of the National Soccer League, Souths came up trumps in what was a traditional finals duel.

Both teams spurned opportunities, but Curcija's contribution proved decisive and Stuart Munro's team muscle their way to Adelaide in good spirits given their return to form and United's near demise.

In the second leg of the first elimination final, Brisbane Strikers were desperately unlucky not to progress, after staging an incredible comeback.

The home side were clearly in the mood to push Adelaide United all the way, but they had to wait until stoppage time at the end of the first half to reduce the three goal arrears from the first leg.

Both teams shook off their reputations as hard working, defensively capable teams by competing in two highly entertaining fixtures, which ended in an astonishing 4-4 aggregate scoreline.

"GOOOAAAAAALLL" – Power players celebrate Peter Zorbas' scorcher against the Glory. (Photo By Carlos Furtado)

SOCCER NSW FOR APL?

By Mark Stavroulakis

If what could be a possible trend for various Federations across Australia, this nation's most admirable leader of the pack SOCCER NSW could possibly turn another new chapter into its books by including a side for next season's Australian Premier League.

Headed by SOCCER NSW President Tom Doumanis, the Federation has had many interests from various investors who believe that the powerful Federation has what it takes to be amongst Australia's elite competition.

Likened to what Adelaide United put forward this season, with the help of all local clubs in the area, SOCCER NSW could fill the void of that mysterious second Sydney side in a possible 8-team competition set to kick off next November.

New ASA CEO John O'Neill stated on SBS' On the ball program that he would want to approach a one team per state scenario and that a smaller competition will be the possible scenario for the new league next Spring/Summer.

Casting doubts as to who will be Sydney's representatives, SOCCER NSW will be looking towards establishing a firm offer in preparing a new franchise next year.

Having been the main player in pushing for Frank Lowy as new ASA chairman last year, Doumanis' stronghold on gaining that chance could be granted if the criteria are met by fellow clubs from across the NSW state.

Already the supposed Sydney Blues venture could be headlining one of the new clubs in next year's APL, but with the new SOCCER NSW venture set to take place, a much stronger vision has been outlined by the Federation from its headquarters in Glenwood.

● Cahill: The Real Story — Page 4
● 8 Page Soccer NSW Lift-Out
● World Wrap on the Biggest Leagues from across the globe

VENABLES FOR NEWCASTLE

By Mark Stavroulakis

Newcastle United chairman Con Constantine has returned from his English trip with some very good news.

In what would be a huge coup for the club, former Socceroo coach Terry Venables could be calling the shots Energy Australia Stadium for the start of the new APL next year.

Constantine, along with former Northern Spirit chairman Remo Nogarotto both flew to Newcastle for discussions with famous Magpies club.

A deal is believed to have been struck between the two clubs in reference to the exchange of players, and also the possibility of gaining special guest players for the Australian side.

Sir Bobby Robson's team have also been impressed with the youth structure so much so that they want to tap into Newcastle's youth factory in getting the best products sent to St James' Park.

Terry Venables has been targeted by Australian club Newcastle United as their new coach for the APL season next year.

Building a side for next year's elite competition, Constantine's vision is to build a 'super-team' that will see the emergence of a new soccer side in Australia.

ABSW understands that Ian Crook's time as manager of Newcastle is up and that the former Norwich star will accept the new role of coach with the proposed Sydney Blues venture.

Having finished eleventh in the final NSL season, the current Parklea owner has demanded that success must come very soon and will do anything at all costs to gain the attention of the Newcastle faithful.

(Continued on page 3)

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BY DANIEL KUZIOW

Chesterfield will keep tabs on injured midfielder Jamie McMaster following his return to Leeds United from his loan spell.

The 21-year-old Aussie has impressed during six appearances for the Spireites, scoring twice, but has had to return to Elland Road for treatment on a recurring ankle injury.

McMaster has received an injection to deal with persistent swelling but if unsuccessful he may need an operation, which would rule him out for the rest of the season.

However, if the injury clears up before the transfer deadline on March 25, then the youngster may return to Saltergate to complete his loan deal.

Chesterfield manager Roy McFarland said: "We continue to monitor the situation because if there is any chance Jamie can play football again this season we know he would like to come back on loan with Chesterfield."

★ ★ ★ ★

Kilmarnock striker Danny Invincibile wants to extend his contract at Rugby Park when it comes up for renewal in the summer.

But he will wait until a top six-place is secured before he goes looking for Killie boss Jim Jefferies to re-sign.

The 24-year-old, notched up his third goal in only two games last weekend, helping Jefferies' side to snatch a draw against Hearts.

Invincibile met a flicked on corner kick in the 87th minute to nod into an empty net after Andy Webster had put the visitors ahead.

And with his one-year deal up at the end of May, Invincible is hoping a successful end to the season for Killie will mean he will stay in Scotland a while longer.

He told annanova.com: "I haven't talked to anyone yet about a new contract. Obviously winning a place in the top six is a priority and we're going to wait to see what happens.

"The top six is on everyone's minds and until then everything else is being put on the back burner.

"But I would like to stay. I'm having a fantastic time and it's good that I can now go out and play well again, which I haven't been able to do.

"I've got an agreement with the club which means I will be offered something and it's just a matter of whether both parties agree.

"I'm happy here and I'd love to sign a new contract but there's more important things at the moment to worry about.

"I felt fit and fine in my first two games but since then the injury and lack of match practice has been a hindrance, but in the past couple of weeks I've felt good, the confidence is back so hopefully I can keep that going.

"It's been two weeks in a row that I've scored and we've come away with a win and a draw."

Meanwhile Invincible insists that consistent form in the SPL won't harm his chances of receiving a call-up to the Socceroos.

Invincibile said: "Every footballer's ambitions is to play in the national team but obviously Australia has a strong squad and you've got some big players in it.

"But it's not up to me, it's out of my hands. If I do okay then the manager might have a look at me.

"But there is a lot of Australian players out there who are battling for a place so it's not an easy task."

★ ★ ★ ★

Kevin Muscat may think twice about overruling Dennis Wise when it comes to taking penalties in future after his miss meant Millwall must replay their FA Cup quarter-final against Tranmere.

The Lions skipper struck his effort straight down the middle and Tranmere's outstanding goalkeeper John Achterberg deflected it over the crossbar with less than 15 minutes remaining at the New Den to secure a goalless draw.

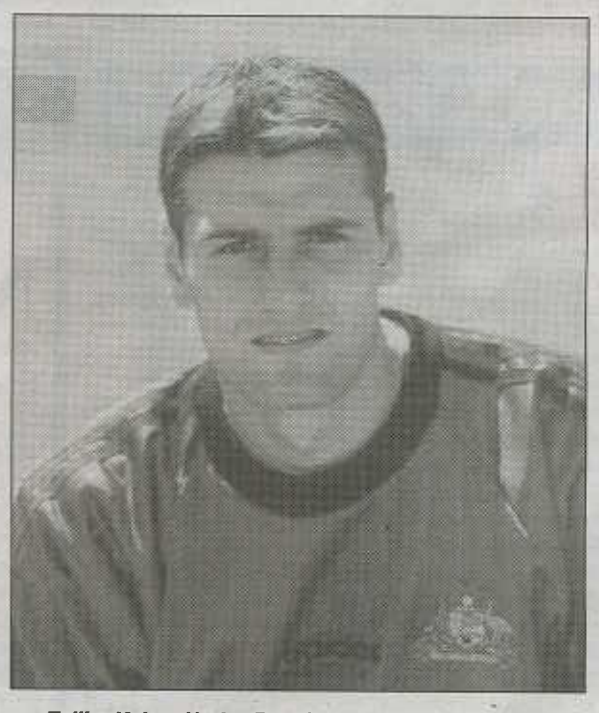
Wise told sportinglife.com: "I should have taken the penalty but Kevin Muscat was so positive about it and you have to let him get on with it. He tried and missed."

Assistant manager Ray Wilkins revealed Wise was disgusted with himself for allowing Muscat to take the kick, but backed the Australian defender's judgement.

He said: "Dennis is disgusted with himself because he didn't take the penalty but Kevin Muscat was so confident and if you're out there and you do feel you can put it in then get hold of the ball.

"I've never been one of these fellows who says well, he's the penalty-taker because he could be having a real stinker. Whoever feels they can have a go can have a go.

"Muzzy showed enough courage to take it and there are no qualms as far as we're concerned."



Kevin Muscat: His missed penalty for Millwall against Tranmere means the two teams will have to replay their FA Cup quarter Final.

★ ★ ★ ★

Former U17 Joey striker Matthew Engele has returned from his overseas adventures and will play for the Blacktown City Demons this year in the NSW Premier League.

Having played in Italy with Chievo Verona's Primavera squad, before venturing off to Scotland in the Premier League with Dundee, Engele has called the Demons home once again.

An ex-player for the side, Engele returned to Sydney due to the financial problems Dundee faced with payments etc, with the club folding into administration.

★ ★ ★ ★

Look to see Empoli's Aussie star Vince Grella take part in a prestigious Serie A club next season if the club fail to stay in Italy's top flight.

Already the likes of Inter, Juventus and AC Milan have shown a keen interest the Australian midfielder.

Its been a tough year however for the former Carlton star, injury has cut short his run to the top of the starting eleven side.

★ ★ ★ ★

Wollongong Wolves' promising young defender Jacob Timpano has been called up on trials overseas.

The former U17 Australian international will trial with sides from England and Italy, one club in particular will have yet another Australian trialing on their books.

Empoli's strong Australian connection seems to get stronger and stronger by the day as Timpano will be amongst the many trialists during the off-season break in Europe.

At the moment, another Australian, goalkeeper Dimirti Brinias is at the Tuscan club trying to make his break into getting a contract at the club.

Away from Brinias, former AIS graduate Dez Giraldi is said to have agreed terms with Empoli and will join the squad very soon.

Meanwhile, current Aussie Primavera stars Nicholas Stavroulakis and Frank Lagana continue to impress at the club as the pair have pulled in fitting performances for the squad.

It is believed that two rival Serie A and B clubs have been monitoring both Aussie Boys performances, but Empoli have stated that they will do what it takes to hold onto these key players.

Perugia erratic president Luciano Gaucci has blasted goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac after last weekend's effort against Udinese.

Gaucci is demanding coach Serse Cosmi immediately drop 'Spider' and replace him with reserve keeper Stefano Pardini after Kalac's error cost the Serie A strugglers two points against Udinese.

"We had to win the match against Udinese but instead we drew because of a mistake by our keeper," stated the Perugia president.

"I want to know what is going on in his head. I think it is probably through a lack of motivation but football is a profession, not a game.

"I will talk with our coach because we can't lose matches due to keeper mistakes. Kalac is a good player but if he is not doing his job then he should be dropped and Pardini should be brought in."

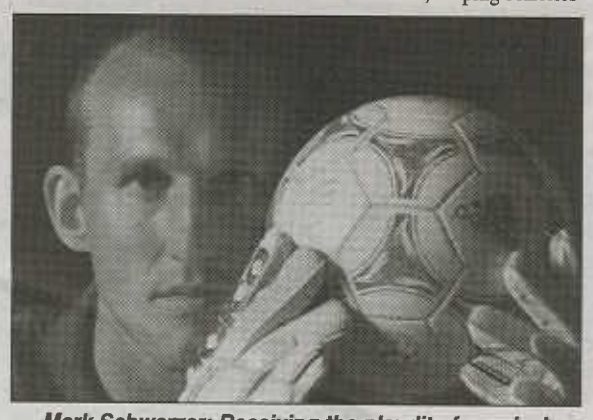
However, Cosmi defended Kalac, insisting: "Against Udinese he made a mistake but these things happen.

"He will be given the chance to react in a good way in our next game against Modena."

★ ★ ★ ★

Tottenham goalkeeping coach Hans Segers has hailed Middlesbrough's No1 Mark Schwarzer for the way he came back to help snare the Carling Cup for the club's maiden cup victory.

Segers, a former Wimbledon favourite told Tottenham's website: "For me, the Carling Cup final summed up Mark.



Mark Schwarzer: Receiving the plaudits from rival Premier League clubs for his outstanding form.

"He made a mistake but his strength is that he forgot about it and made two crucial saves after that to make sure they won the cup.

"It's what you expect from a Premier League goalkeeper because they are at the top of their game.

"A lot of goalkeepers get tested when they are in a situation like that, they make a mistake and it's how they react.

"You expect them to react positively and that's not always easy. You can see that from goalkeepers in the lower divisions and youngsters who find it hard and will do silly things to try and compensate for the mistake.

"Consistency is the key factor as far as Mark is concerned. He's a good kicker, will come for crosses and his shot stopping, as is the case with every keeper in the Premier League, has to be good."

★ ★ ★ ★

Zeljko Kalac: Under fire after a recent form slump.

Warren Battles Cancer Yet Again

FORMER AUSTRALIAN WORLD CUP CAPTAIN, Johnny Warren, has yet again been struck by Cancer after latest test results came through last week that showed lung tumours had suddenly returned.

Warren was first diagnosed with lung cancer on Melbourne Cup Day in 2002 but over the past nine months it appeared that the former Australian International captain had won the race against this dreadful sickness.

"It's a massive shock which I did not see coming," Warren stated publicly over the week-end.

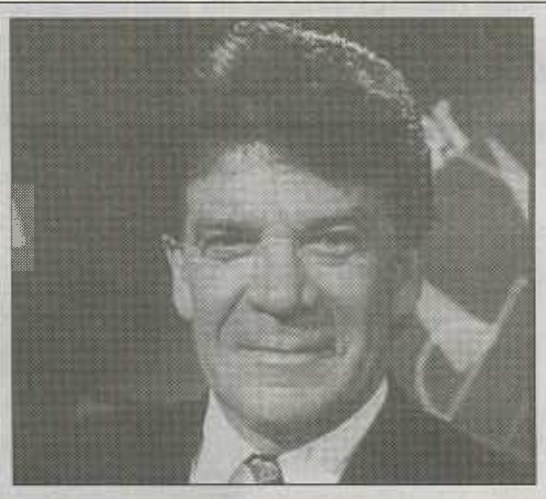
"I've been feeling well, everyone tells me I look so well, but now it starts all over again. It's another fight, it's a replay of the Final we thought we had won. You can never assume anything with Cancer. It's a silent enemy that you have to learn to live with.

"In many ways this time it's worse than when I was first diagnosed, because I just didn't expect it."

Following nine months in remission, the former Australian captain who turns 61 in May, yesterday (Monday), kicked off a new series of chemotherapy at Sydney's Prince Alfred Hospital.

Over the next four months Warren will participate in a clinical trial for new cancer-treating drugs through intravenous.

Following the initial prognosis he'd been given back in November 2002, Warren flew out to Houston Texas for a second opinion at the World's leading Instute for Cancer.



Johnny Warren: Struck down by Cancer again.

He returned to Sydney where his treatment commenced which was closely monitored by some of the World's leading cancer specialists based in Texas.

Further tests last May signified that Warren had greatly responded to the concentrated treatment and that the tumours in his lungs had almost disappeared.

Warren elected to go public last week-end with his dramatic set-back to drive home full awareness of this killing disease.

"A lot of prominent people have cancer, yet we don't know about it. That's wrong.

"So much more they could do for cancer awareness with their profile," Warren reasoned.

John Warren was installed as the youngest Australian captain in October 1967 at the age of 24 and seven years later went to the first, and only, World Cup Finals in Hamburg.

From all at *ABSW* and all its readers, we wish Johnny Warren a fast and speedy recovery.

Moore's warning to Rangers

SOCCEROO skipper Craig Moore has warned struggling Rangers he won't pledge his long-term future to the club until he is happy with the direction it is taking, it was reported in the Scottish media.

Moore's deal expires in the (northern) summer of 2006 and boss Alex McLeish is desperate to keep him for two years longer.

The Rangers captain dropped his bombshell to the The Sunday Mail after scoring in Saturday's 1-1 Scottish Premier League draw with Hearts.

He said: 'I've plenty of time to sit down, talk and decide what's going to happen. We know we will lose players this summer.

Craig Moore could reassess his future at Rangers next season.

'It is important to wait and see who we bring in and to find out what's going to happen next season.

'I spoke to the club about the future six months ago. I was surprised it was made out I approached them first. That was not the case. In fact, when we were speaking about it I wasn't out injured. I said we should wait until I was fit and playing again before we took discussions further."

O'Neill seeks meeting with Kewell

Australia's football chief John O'Neill said on Sunday he wanted to independently verify Liverpool striker Harry Kewell's position that he was unable to travel long distances for friendly matches because of injury.

"We're getting some clarification on that. Certainly Harry has a chronic ankle injury," O'Neill told Australia television.

"We're not disbelieving him. We just need a bit of our own verification. Clearly we would love to see Harry Kewell playing in a Socceroo jersey on every possible occasion. If there are bona fide reasons why he can't, we'll get to the bottom of that."

O'Neill, who took over as chief executive of the Australian Soccer Association (ASA) a week ago, said he supported the ASA's decision to enforce a one-match club ban on Mark Viduka.

The Leeds United striker pulled out of the last month's friendly against Venezuela in Caracas because of injury.

Swiss-based Scott Chipperfield was also banned, but the ASA excused four other players from the friendly because of injury, including Kewell.

Australia's next friendly is at Loftus Road in London against South Africa on March 30.

"If a player has an injury ... and can't play, fine. But if it's an excuse to get out of playing for his country, well that's not the sort of player that we want," O'Neill said.

O'Neill, who has left his post as Australian Rugby Union chief executive after playing a key role in organising last year's successful Rugby World Cup in Australia, said he was desperate to resurrect Australian football after not qualifying for the World Cup since 1974.

"So many players who were in similar positions (to Viduka) had just finished a club game, hopped on a plane to Caracas and played," he said.

"If those players start to think there is one rule for superstars and a different rule for the foot-soldiers, I don't think that does Australian football any good. There is no bigger superstar (than Kewell). I would hope to meet with him."

O'Neill added Australia would host two friendlies against Turkey in May, although final details were unconfirmed.

Source – Reuter

WILL IT BE 8?

By Mark Stavroulakis

The big question that is currently lingering itself in the face of the new Australian Premier League season is will the competition have eight sides?

Judging from new ASA CEO John O'Neill's comments it looks that way.

After an interview on SBS' The World Game last weekend, O'Neill raised the issue of starting off with a smaller competition.

"I'd prefer to start with a smaller competition rather than a larger one. As we've seen its much easier to add teams that to try and deduct them."

"I think there is a very strong preference for one team per city to give the league the best chance of success. Having accepted the principle that makes the configuration of the league a bit different to what people expect".

At this stage, the proposed plan of teams could look like this:

**2 Sydney Clubs*
**2 Melbourne Clubs*
**Perth*
**Adelaide*
**Brisbane*
**New Zealand*

Bearing in mind, proposals from Canberra, Tasmania, QLD and a few offers from NSW have also flown into ASA's offices.

No doubt O'Neill will certainly have his work cut out but many soccer followers believe that the former ARU boss has to deliver something for the code or else.

O'Neill though has had the help of his new board that he believes will be the driving force behind pushing the code to reputable status along with the other footballing codes across Australia.

"It's a high quality board with no self-interest and no sectoral interest. They all have their own particular gifts and it's a refreshing environment".

A new environment it will be as ASA's offices have moved on from their current base in the heart of Homebush Bay to the hustle and bustle of the city on College St opposite Hyde Park.

A business plan has already been pushed forward by O'Neill and is working side-by-side with the ASC in getting the best possible results.

Major sponsors will be targeted according to the new CEO, but first and foremost, the groundwork must be laid in order for the code to achieve a hight market status.

The inspired John O'Neill then left some final words to SBS Host Les Murray which all-Australian soccer followers should take note:

"I said on day one there is no magic wand. We have to be properly cautious but also ambitious. And I am certainly that".

VENABLES FOR NEWCASTLE

For so long, the Newcastle region has been known for its strong Rugby League roots with NRL side the Newcastle Knights.

With the hopeful signing of Venables, along with a string of former English stars, the gates at Energy Australia Stadium could be packed to the brim next season – provided that they meet with the new ASA criteria which the club believes will have no problem.

One great incentive that has come from the club this year has been the success of its youth squad in the Northern Division League.

Newcastle United's youth squad will be playing for the right of being known as one of the best youth side's from this side of town when they meet Minor Premiers Canberra Deakin in the Finals.

It was no secret that under Crook, many youngsters made their debuts in the National League with the likes of Mitchell Wallace, Jobe Wheelhouse, Mitchell Johnson, Josh Mitchell, Keegan Wolfenden and Joel Thiessen to name a few.

ADELAIDE WAKE-UP CALL

Adelaide United coach John Kosmina is confident his charges will bounce back from Saturday's 4-1 defeat in Brisbane that left many of the South Australian's shaking their heads in dismay.

United face a rejuvenated South Melbourne this weekend in an elimination final at a packed Hindmarsh Stadium and Kossie told *The Advertiser*, "The loss has shaken up everybody and perhaps that's what we needed. "There's a lot of spirit in the team and I'm expecting the guys will show that at training.

"Saturday's match is going to be totally different. It's sudden-death and it's what finals football is about." "It was sh..t, that's what I thought of the performance," he said.

"We didn't deserve to go through. We panicked, lost shape and had a few players who went missing tonight." Kosmina said there was no ranting or raving behind closed doors after the game.

"The door was open (to the rooms) and I didn't have to say anything to them because they know (after a performance like that)."

Hard man Ross Aloisi admitted, This is a real kick in the teeth. "Look, I'm sure we'll get over it, but right now I feel sick. We don't feel relieved. We are very unhappy with the way we played. This was a reality check."

Adelaide United coach has warned his squad that they must be on their toes against South Melbourne this Saturday evening.

THE 'REAL' CAHILL STORY

Tim Cahill's inclusion in the Socceroos this week is part of a very long story.

Special Report
By Stuart Jones

He has fought long and hard to play for Australia and whilst most of the soccer media in Australia have ignored his plight, and previous officialdom denied the responsibility they had in causing the problem, we at the *Australian & British Soccer Weekly* have kept you up to date with the ongoing saga.

So now we turn to the end of the fight and all the other outlets now speak to him but we have the inside word with the Cahill's having supported him all the way, in public and in private.

For it is not just a story about Tim, and his mother Sis, who is Samoan but now resides in Australia. For Tim senior and Sis, now happily leaving in Sydney's South West, had three boys and the boys road to soccer fame epitomizes many a footballer's story. There is the player who never reaches the heights but plays through the lower leagues and non league structure to make a career out of football, there is the seasoned professional, and there is the youngster still aspiring to play Premier league football and play for Australia.

The Cahill brothers, before they were stars: L-R (Sean, Christian and Tim).

Sean is the oldest. Like his brother Tim, he is also an international player having represented Samoa in goals, something he wants to achieve again. He played five matches for Samoa in Fiji and New Zealand when they won the Polynesian Cup. Sean is a goalkeeper and after playing his trade in the lower leagues of England he returned home for three years before returning to the UK and plying his trade in the world of non-league football.

"I play for Cray Wanderers in the Kent League one off the conference. We have a very good chairman, Gary Hillman, who has big plans for the club. We have done extremely well in the FA Trophy this year and it has been great to be part of a winning side."

Even for footballers though, at this level, other work must be done to get a decent wage, "Football does not always pay that much so I must work as well. I travel throughout the UK promoting Movies so it is not a bad job. Add to my normal job training twice a week, gym work, and playing through Kent in the league and throughout the UK (e.g. Newcastle) in the Cups and I am very busy indeed."

For every Tim there are a thousand Sean's. Players with potential who did not get the breaks when they needed and now struggle to etch out a football career. Perhaps it was best epitomized by Gary Nelson's book "Left foot forward", a book about a player making his career in the lower leagues. Sean is back on the edge of making it back into those lower leagues. "Recently interest has abounded but I want the best offer for this stage of my life so I am still mulling over them. I also play matches with Millsy FC for Millwall supporters and it would be hard to give that fun side of football up as well as my job so we will wait and see."

"As for international football I would love to be involved with Samoa again. There has been some media interest over here along the lines of the international keeper playing non league football but I am not getting ahead of myself. David Brand has been excellent for Samoan football and I would love to be involved in any capacity."

Sean's career really represents most of us and although he got the chance to play overseas and international football it really is still a matter of what could have been.

Tim is the middle brother and if not for his self belief he could have ended up in 'the what could have been' category to. He was told he was not strong enough to play by Sydney Olympic and that could have ended his career. However with the support of his parents Tim Senior and Sis, he went over to London (the birth place of his father – right up the road from Terry Venables) and trailed for Millwall – and won a place. He came up through the ranks and now plays a midfield role that not only sees him set up many a goal but get in the goal scoring ranks more often than not.

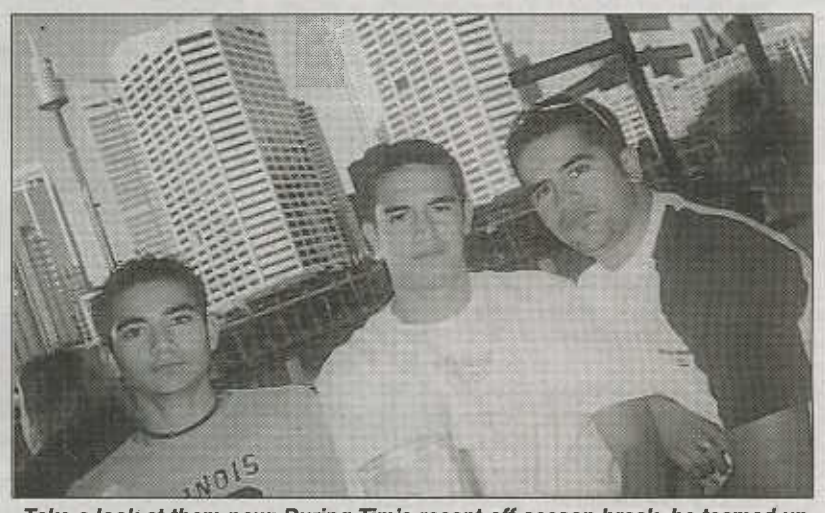
For Tim his football career has had its ups and downs. He has developed great friendships in football, like the one he shares with Socceroo Lucas Neill, and now has the finances to set himself up for life, but he has also had the regret of not being able to play for Australia, and a leg injury that could have cut his career very short.

"I speak to a lot of people who say 'You are lucky'. Yes I am doing what I always wanted and in that regard I am better off than a lot of people however what they don't see is the sacrifices that have been made by me along the way. I had to show devotion to the game. I had to overcome the fact that some of my managers told me I would never make it, they were very negative towards me. It helped though in the fact it built up a stronger me inside and I also had the chance to work on my weaknesses.

Other child prodigies went out along the way but I blossomed late, but it meant I had to work hard even before that just to stay level. In the end hard work, my parent's dedication and money got me here. Even those at the top originally had to have parents willing to buy us all the football gear and drive us around the country on a Saturday and to training weeknights. My parents had to even take a loan out to originally send me here.

I lost a lot of my childhood, I grew up in a strange country and I worked very hard when others were partying. In the end the hard work has paid off and where I am is down to that a lot, although of course luck played a minor role as well. When I am asked how I made it now I say it is a combination of luck, good guidance from my parents, being goal oriented and pure hard work."

"Others say it must be great playing in front of large crowds in Division One but it is not really about the crowds. In the end it is just about playing football. The perks are good, there is no doubting that. I am used to living overseas now although one day I will return to Australia to live. In the end though it is about the football, I just love playing it."



Take a look at them now: During Tim's recent off-season break, he teamed up with his two best friends and brothers (Chris – Far Left) & (Sean – Far Right) for a drink in the best city of the world.

Last season Tim faced his biggest challenge having injured his leg so bad he could have faced early retirement.

"I have always been strong minded and I was not going to let the injury beat me. The injury was definitely the biggest test of my career but the doctors say my leg is now stronger than it ever has been. During the lay off I had to put the doubts away, anyway I had goals to achieve so there was no room for doubt."

One of those goals was, and still is, to play in the Premiership. "Millwall have the capabilities to make it there although struggle to match the big boys when it comes to buying players. Dennis Wise and Ray Wilkins have instilled a winning attitude in the side and we want to match it with the best on the park. I want to get the best out of the next 18 months of my career. There has been Premiership interest in me but the offers have not been accepted. I want to play Premier League football with Millwall but if they can not make it then some other team. Playing consistently good football will see Premiership and international football come my way."

This is where he is now. For Tim Cahill there is no club verse country conflict. He will play for his country any time he is asked. He is a proud Australian and desires nothing less than to don the green and gold.

"I am committed to the Aussie cause. I have fought long and hard to be eligible and I believe I can bring something to the team. I would love to play alongside the likes of Schwarzer, Muscat, Neill, Kewell, Viduka and Bresciano." He would fit perfectly into the Australian midfield. Just think of a starting eleven like Kalac, Emerton, Popovic, Moore, Milicevic, Neill, Bresciano, Vieri, Cahill, Kewell and Viduka with reserves like Elrich, Colosimo, Lazaridis, Grella, Agostino, Zdrilic, Aloisi, Tarka, and Schwarzer.

In the end Tim is a committed family man. He and Rebecca have a great son in Kyah and he wants to one day return to these shores to settle down but in the interim there is a lot of good football for him now and in the near future.

Christian is the youngest of the three boys and his father, Tim senior, believes age for age he is an even better player than Tim junior. Christian is a young man who has already tasted overseas football and shows the same desire and self belief that got his middle brother so far. He has recently finished a stint with Parramatta Power and is off to fulfil a couple of appointments trailing with Premier league teams in the UK.

"I am looking forward to getting over there. I believe I can play well in a good team in England. I have a strong belief in my game and look forward to demonstrating my abilities to sides over there. A number of people, including my parents, have strong faith in me and I want to reward myself and my supporters."

Christian is 'Mr Utility' but his best game is in midfield although in a slightly different role to Tim.

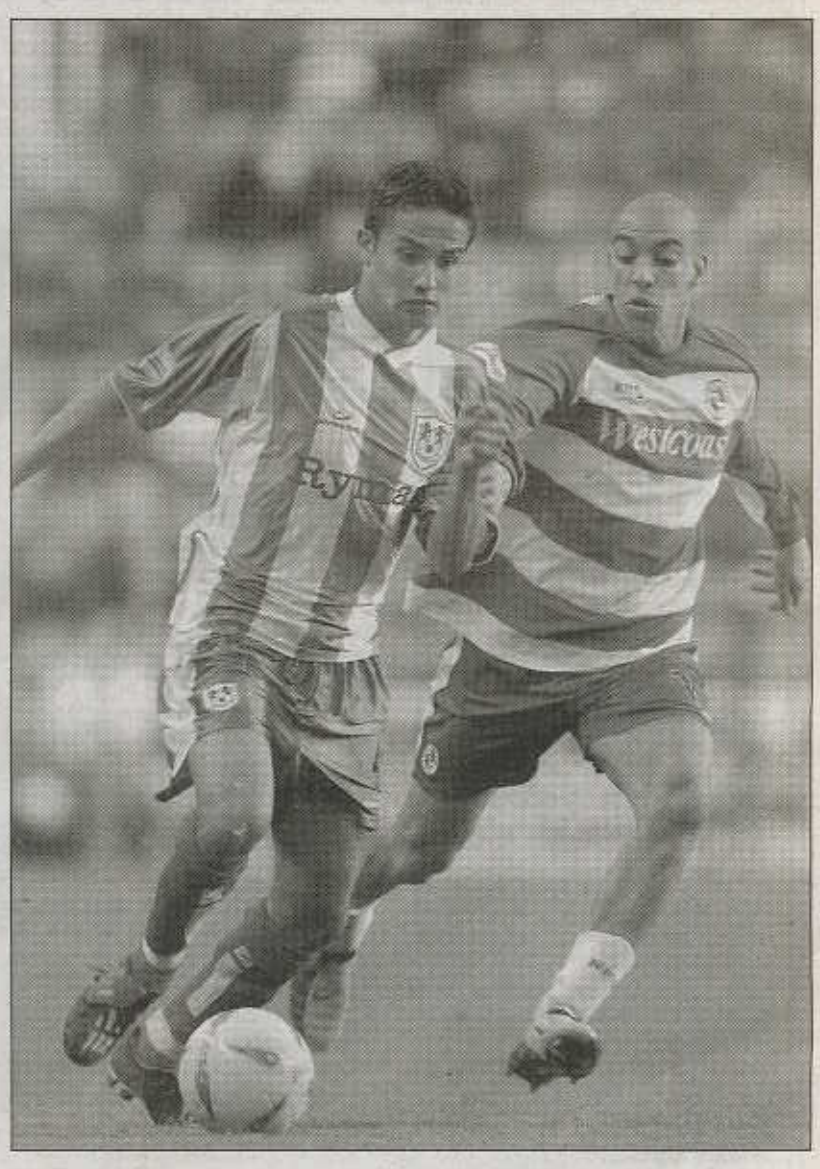
"I am more a distributor of the ball, my biggest buzz is seeing a team mate score from a play I set up. Perhaps I need to be a bit greedier and aim to score more myself but I really enjoy playing football as a team game. I don't mind going in to get the ball in midfield and I have a definite longer term aim to play in the same Aussie midfield as Tim, winning the ball for myself or him to use."

As was the case with Tim, Christian has had his doubters in Australia but looking at the Cahill's track record this is not going to hold back the youngest of the breed.

"I have definite aims and goals and at my age it is crunch time. I have to make a choice between what is and what could have been."

The Cahills represent a whole gamut of footballing stories, 'the what might have been, the what is, and the what could be'. If youngsters learn from each of their stories then they have surely learnt some lessons for living life in general.

Of all the lessons outlined above the one about a parent's commitment to their child's dream is the one we should all take most heed of. Sis and Tim Cahill senior can sit back and be proud of their achievement in Sean, Tim and Christian Cahill.



Millwall's Australian star, Timmy Cahill shown in action in the Nationwide First Division.

O'NEILL SET TO PUT SOCCER IN ORDER

John O'Neill faces many tasks in his new role as Chief Executive of the Australian Soccer Association, but one task he believes is highly critical if the game in this country is to reach its full potential - is that of 'Unity of Purpose'.

After taking Australian Rugby from its lowest point eight and half years ago, to one of the most marketable Australian sports in the country, O'Neill stressed that a lot of the impetus for change came from the rugby community putting aside their differences and working towards a common good.

"The golden era in rugby was a period where a 'unity of purpose' was absolutely paramount in everyone's mind," said O'Neill, speaking on his first day in the job at ASA. "I know what I experienced in the eight and half years in rugby and I know that when we achieved some remarkable success, we did so because we were all singing from the same hymn sheet."

"I think that is going to be an essential ingredient in the success of soccer in the coming years. To the greatest extent possible we are all working with the same sense of purpose, and then what follows will be the same sense of achievement.

"At some time you have to say enough is enough and I think that's what the Crawford Report is all about, so I see myself more of an implement now of change – a change agent. I know I will need as much help as I can get from everyone in the soccer community.

The new ASA supremo however was quick to add that this was not going to happen overnight and there were a lot of challenges, not only for himself, but also for everyone in the game.

"Like I said before, I don't have a magic wand and the size of the challenge is considerable.

"Without creating any exaggeration, I think this job is possibly the hardest job in sport. I am going to have to rely on a good board, good vision, a high quality management team and success on the field and off the field, to get soccer where it should be.

"This is arguably a significant challenge to get ASA back on its feet again."

O'Neill however believes some significant steps have already been taken in meeting these challenges.

"Clearly a lot of work has already taken place, with the Crawford Report, appointment of Frank Lowy and his board,

ASA CEO John O'Neill is set to put the 'world game' in order here in Australia.

help from the Federal Government and the Taskforce report on the NSL, so there is a lot of good things happening.

"I guess my major role is to review the structures, review the organisation, get my head around the business plan that has been put together and have a look at the projections of our financial position going forward.

"At the sharp end, there is a degree of urgency in getting a new national competition up and running and also do our utmost to ensure the Socceroos have the best opportunity possible to qualify for the World Cup in Germany in 2006."

After struggling with a poor governance structure at the top level for many years, O'Neill is very enthusiastic that the sport can finally look towards some form of stability under the new regime, headed by prominent businessman Frank Lowy.

"The governance of soccer is clearly not as good as it should have been and if the governance is not that good then clearly the management of the game becomes even harder.

"It looks as though we have a good three year window where the governance will be in good hands, therefore my ability to manage to achieve the outcomes we are setting ourselves will be a lot easier.

"We then can create elite competitions such as the new National competition and create opportunities for the Socceroos to play more international games and particularly more domestic games, then we will have, a 'dance card' of entertaining soccer games, at a national competition level and an international level that our broadcasters, sponsors and fans will be very attracted to.

"At the same time, grassroots soccer must be nurtured and we must encourage a greater sense of national vision for the game from grassroots to the top end."

Getting the message across however will take many months of hard work, but one that O'Neill is prepared for.

"It will be one of the most significant challenges. It is up to me and the Board in the coming months to try enunciate and communicate a vision and a mission for soccer in this country and to get people to buy into it and to feel like they have an ownership of it.

"What should all look at the big picture. Can we all bind together to ensure the Socceroos become over time a top 20 team, can we all bind together to ensure we have a very attractive, popular, must see national competition, can we all bind together to try and halve the number of players who are currently playing overseas?

Source – ASA Website

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'RAISE THE ROOF FOR CANCER'

The NSW soccer referees are pleased to announce a Sydney Cancer Centre sponsored project to assist Cancer Research in the 'Raise the Roof Campaign' for patron Mr Johnny Warren and the development of NSW referees.

A Gala Ball will be held at the Le Montage, Lilyfield on the 30th April 2004 at 7.00pm for a splendid black tie evening.

International Guests on the night include 5 Italian referees, Tullio Lanese (A.I.A.-Italian Referees Association President) Carlo Tavecchio (F.I.G.C. – Professional National League President) Giuliano Milesi (F.I.G.C. – Professional National League – Regional President) Antonio Salzano (A.I.A. National Executive).

Dignitaries will also include Ministerial Representatives, Sporting personalities and high profile company leaders.

The ASRF (NSW Division) is hoping to raise $100,000.00 through ticket purchases and donations from the evening.

The ASRF (NSW Division) are also selling corporate tables at $1500.00 which will include a corporate display sign on the table. It would be great to see the number of soccer clubs represented on the night.

For further details please contact Brian Seymour on 0411 542 430

The Australian Soccer Referees Federation (N.S.W. Division) is the premier referee body in Australia, continually supplying elite referees to the NSW Premier League, National Soccer League and to FIFA.

NSW referees are now setting a new boundary to further drive the professionalism of referees.

An exchange program with the Italian referees has been secured together with state of the art training facilities and a professional trainer.

Funding of these initiatives is essential to ensure the ongoing recruitment and development of referees.

Johnny Warren (centre) seen here with his boyhood-heroes, international rugby league star Johnny Raper (left) and Kenny Rosewall — Wimbledon winning legend

Give a Red Card to Cancer

Help Johnny Warren 'Raise the Roof' for cancer and support the development of referees in New South Wales.

The NSW Soccer Referees in conjunction with the Sydney Cancer Centre are holding a Black Tie Dinner Ball at Le Montage, Lilyfield on the 30th April 2004 at 7.00pm.

Special guest for the night will be Johnny Warren ex Australian Captain and patron of the Sydney Cancer Centre.

AUSTRALIAN SOCCER REFEREES FEDERATION
N.S.W. DIVISION

We invite you to enjoy this special night with us.

Please contact Brian Seymour on 0411 542 430 for further details.

NSL Elimination Finals – 2nd Leg

Brisbane Strikers	4
Adelaide United	1

Adelaide United win 4-4 on away goal ruling

Adelaide United will face South Melbourne this Saturday for the right to progress to the Preliminary Final.

By Glenn Davis and AAP Reports

Adelaide United scrapped through by a whisker to host the minor semi final tie this weekend despite a 4-1 thrashing by Brisbane Strikers in the second elimination leg at Perry Park on Saturday night.

Two late saves by goalkeeper David Scarsella saved Adelaide United from an embarrassing elimination as Brisbane romped to a 4-1 triumph.

Coming into the game with a three-goal deficit, the Strikers needed four unanswered goals to pull off the mother of all comebacks in NSL finals history.

But it was Scarsella and veteran Carl Veart's 65th minute strike that proved the difference between the two teams over 180 minutes.

Veart's headed goal in the 65th minute sent Brisbane packing from the final series with United going through on away goals.

Scarsella was heroic in the final five minutes, pulling off as string of saves only for Peter Grierson to find the back of the net in the 87th minute.

In the dying seconds both Brain and Rose came close with Scarsella denying Brain while Rose's shot hit the wrong side of the post.

Despite coming agonisingly close, there was to be no miracle for the Strikers and Adelaide advanced to host next Saturday's Minor Semi Final against either South Melbourne or Marconi Stallions.

Adelaide coach John Kosmina blasted his side's lacklustre performance that gave Brisbane its first win after five consecutive losses.

"It was shit and you can quote me on that," Kosmina said.

"We didn't deserve to win. They (Strikers) deserve to go through to the next round with the way we played tonight.

"I'm glad we're not playing Brisbane again. If we play the way we did tonight we might as well forfeit."

Brisbane dominated the opening half, its potent attacking force rewarded in the dying seconds of the period when Warren Moon chipped over Scarsella's head for a 1-0 halftime lead.

During the start of the first –half, referee Matthew Breeze made his first controversial call of the night when Royce Brownlie, who proved a handful for the United defence all night, spun away from a defender and raced towards goal only to be hauled down by Adelaide's Michael Valkanis. The Brisbane players and supporters, mindful of the fact that their own Wayne Heath had been sent for an early shower last week in similar circumstances, were incensed when Breeze produced only a yellow card for Valkanis.

In the twenty-seventh minute, midfielder Brain surged through the heart of the United defence before slipping a clever pass to Brownlie. This time, the striker found himself inside the United penalty area and probably should have been quicker to get a shot away. In the end, his shot was blocked and went out for a corner.

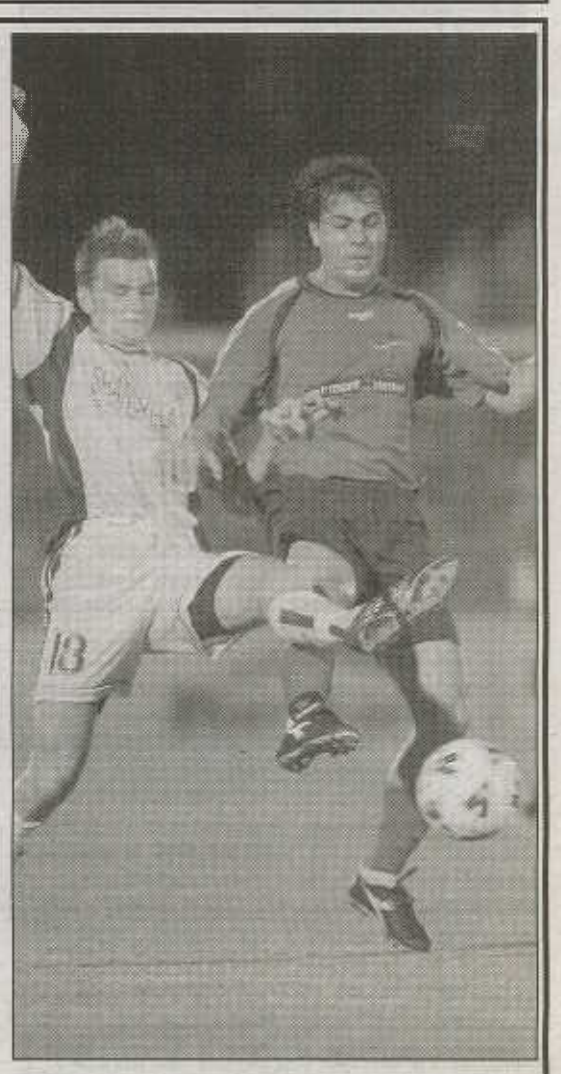
With Moon's late first-half goal giving them much-needed momentum, the Strikers came out firing early in the second stanza.

United began the second half as if they were looking for the goal that would snuff out the home side's renewed optimism. Demourtzidis was making his fresh presence felt and Aloisi managed a rather tame and harmless volley over the bar before Higgins was brought into the game for his first serious taste of the action. Nick Budin beat both Webber and David Pilic on a run down the left wing before firing a low shot which Higgins saved well.

Super-sub Josh Rose made it 2-0 in the 59th minute when he sent the ball flying into the net with Scarsella caught badly out of position.

About a minute later it could, and probably should, have been 3-0. Steve Fitzsimmons, racing in from the right wing, was put in behind the Adelaide defence by a beatifully weighted through-ball. With the Adelaide defensive line in shreds, and Scarsella racing to narrow the angle, Fitzsimmons hit a low shot. It looked in for all money, but rippled only the side netting and Adelaide got off the hook.

Adam Webber at full stretch for the Queenslanders against Adelaide United.



Ross Aloisi being tackled by Strikers attacker Warren Moon during last week's crucial Semi-Final match.

Adelaide almost pulled a goal back five minutes later when Ross Aloisi beat Brisbane keeper Scott Higgins, but his shot was cleared on the line by Stuart McLaren.

United didn't have to wait long to get the vital away goal, however, with Veart making it 2-1 one minute later.

However, the Strikers' attacking force refused to give in as they continued to penetrate United's stacked defence.

But in the eightieth minute Demourtzidis must have sent his coach scurrying for his illustrious tea cup when he was sent off for a tackle on Webber. The forward's rush of blood left his tiring team-mates exposed to a late blitzkrieg by the home side and, suddenly, a tie that had looked unsaveable for Brisbane had a hint of promise about it again.

Brisbane lifted. Moon headed a beautifully flighted cross from Fitzsimmons over the bar a minute later and it was "game on". Then, a further minute later, Brain brought the Brisbane supporters to their feet with what was probably the best goal scored at Perry Park this season as he charged forward from midfield, beat a defender and then skinned Scarsella with an exquisite chip from the edge of the area.

Grierson was sent off in the dying moments after it appeared he had been brought down in the box for a penalty.

But referee Matthew Breeze thought otherwise and waved play-on.

Grierson jumped to his feet and objected forcing Breeze to give him his marching orders.

Grierson later said there was no doubt he had been fouled in the box, which denied the Strikers a likely 89th minute goal and a chance to go further into the finals.

Strikers' player-coach Stu McLaren did a superb job to get the Strikers into the play-offs in his first season in a coaching role.

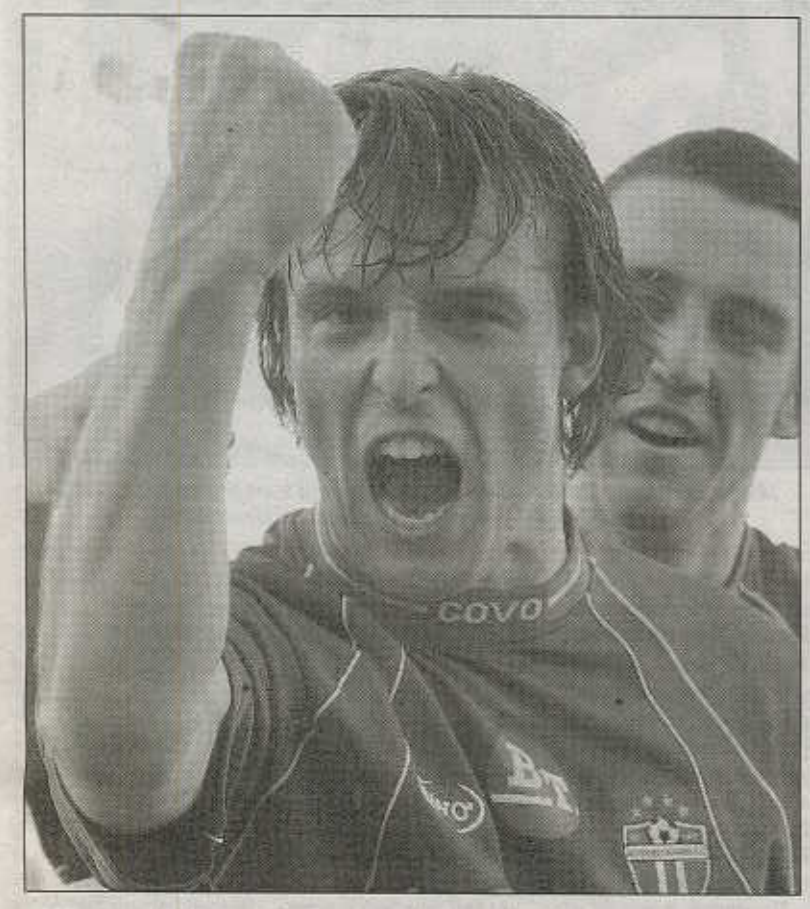
"That's the best game I've been involved in six years with the club, without being on the winning side, I'm so proud of the boys," McLaren said.

"They never gave up and in the end we'll rue the missed chances, both this week and last week," he said.

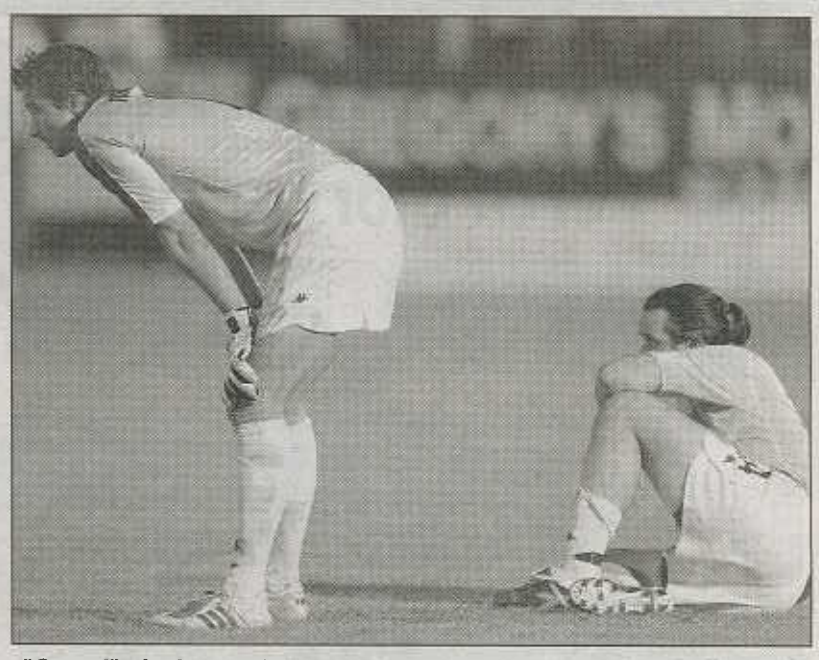
NSL Elimination Finals - 2nd Leg

South Melbourne	2
Marconi Stallions	0

South Melbourne wins 2-0 on aggregate



"That's All Folks" - Michael Curcija gives the fists up after scoring a double against the Stallions last Sunday evening.



"Gutted" - is the word used by Marconi stars Michael Turnbull (standing) & Angelo Costanzo after being knocked out of the Homeart Finals Series race.

By Alan Clark

South Melbourne advanced to the minor semi-final with a solid two-nil win over Marconi Stallions in an entertaining and committed contest at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday evening.

Michael Curcija opened the scoring midway through the first-half with a glancing header, then blasted home from close-range one hour in to take a firm grip of the match. South had put behind itself its jittery run coming into the Finals and set up an intriguing game against Adelaide United at Hindmarsh Stadium next week.

"It was a very professional performance over the two games," said South coach Stuart Munro. "We set our stall out over the two legs to win the tie. We stuck to the plan.

"I had a quiet word with Michael (Curcija) before the game and told him how important it was to get himself in amongst the goals and he's responded. I thought it was fantastic."

"It was a very entertaining game," said Marconi coach Jean-Paul de Marigny despite his disappointment after the match. "I thought we played extremely well the first fifteen minutes and created two great chances. It was a good opening and if we had put one away (at that point) it changes the whole scene.

"But credit to the lads. I've been so proud of them all year. They've turned the football club (after last year's poor performance) to fourth. And they never gave up."

The stakes were high in this game - for one of the teams, not only would the season end, but in the light of the plans for a totally revamped National League, their very existence would as well.

Both sides were foundation members – two of only three still plying their trades at elite national level as the others have variously withdrawn, been relegated, or even disbanded, sometimes – disastrously – partway through a season.

And neither side had just been making up the numbers at national level - both had won more than their fair share of National Championships.

With four apiece, in aggregate these two teams had won nearly one third of all those contested in the league's 27-year history – and figured in countless Finals series.

There was little between them coming into the second-leg after a scoreless first-leg in Sydney the previous week – perhaps the advantage Marconi had were it to score an away goal was nullified by South's home-ground advantage, but it was a mouthwatering contest in prospect.

Not the least of the reasons would be to see the exciting youngsters fielded by the teams.

Marconi's Alex Brosque sets spectators, pulses racing, and South Melbourne's Massimo Murdocca has shown enough to make him one to mark for future honours.

Pint-sized Murdocca had weaved a piece of magic just eight minutes in when he went on a mazy run which bewildered three Stallions, opponents before feeding Kiwi international Vaughan Coveny. Michael Turnbull was quickly out of goal to block Coveny's shot.

Shortly after, Brosque showed he would not be outshone by combining with Joe Spiteri in a sharply executed one-two at the edge of the penalty-area before unleashing a stinging shot which required a fine save from Olyroo keeper Eugene Galekovic.

"(Tonight's game) was about scoring goals, and that,s what we went for," said de Marigny.

With such a vibrant opening by both sides, a goal was on the cards. It was not long in coming. After yet another Stallions, foray, South made a swift break, and from a deep position, the ball was played to Con Boutsianis mid-pitch. Boutsianis made some ground up the inside-left channel before sending a ball to Curcija equally as driven as crossed such was its fierceness. Curcija got just the right amount of head to the ball to send it past Turnbull low down at the post.

Brendan Renaud almost brought Marconi back into the game before the South fans, celebrations had died down. Running up the left into space cleverly created by Marconi's swift passage of the ball through Spiteri, Brosque, then Nick Carle each then moving inside and taking their markers with them, Renaud's shot flashed across the face of goal.

If South suspected Turnbull was vulnerable to shots from distance, it was put to the test when Ante Kovacevic launched one from fully 40 yards. Then

Boutsianis tried from marginally closer, requiring Turnbull to make a diving covering save as it collected the top of the bar on its way through.

Grant Last, then Chad Gibson as the half drew to a close, each took heart from this display of long-range shooting to do some of their own, requiring Galekovic to be alert.

Defences were generally having the better of the game with Stallions, Angelo Costanzo and South's Kovacevic completing full defensive shifts as well as providing some assistance to their own attacks.

As the game continued, Costanzo's loping runs from the back required shadowing, such is his danger in the air. But even he was unable to provide the impetus to break through the South defence.

Curcija netted again on the hour to give South the breathing space it needed. Curcija was first to a loose ball and crashed it home only minutes after squandering a golden opportunity when he had burst past Dominic Longo only to shoot into the side-netting from directly in front.

With the second, Marconi needed to net twice itself. Whereas one Stallions, goal was always a realistic possibility, two seemed a task too great.

De Marigny rang the changes after that replacing Longo and Renaud for Todd Brodie and Shane Webb respectively, but it was still not enough to find a path back into the game.

Carle and Brosque looked to have set up a goal deep into the game's last minutes with a well-crafted one-two, setting Brosque free inside the six-yard area for a shot. But Galekovic had spotted the possibilities and met the ball at precisely the same time as Brosque shot, blocking the danger.

"I said three or four weeks ago (South) is going to get better and better," said Munro.

"We lost our way a little bit, but (I can) see the confidence starting to rise with the clean sheets we've had over the last two games. Next week, we'll be even better again."

South farewelled club greats Paul Trimboli and Mehmet Durakovic pre-game, although Durakovic played a cameo as a late substitute.

De Marigny paid tribute to both players before his departure from the stadium. "It's been a pleasure playing against (Durakovic) and following his career, and the same with Trimboli for his 450 games."

Tensions flared between both sides during the late stages of the match.

NSL Major Semi-Final – 1st Leg

Parramatta Power	4
Perth Glory	2

"Dancing the Zorba" – Power utility Peter Zorbas celebrates with his team-mates after scoring an absolute cracker against the Glory last Sunday afternoon. (Photo By Carlos Furtado)

By Stuart Jones

This was a match that could have graced fields anywhere around the world. Parramatta Power and Perth Glory put on a show to remember on Sunday afternoon at Parramatta Stadium. An impressive, and vocal, crowd of 6059 saw six goals and a final score of Power four-two in favour of the Power.

The results certainly hands Parramatta a great chance to make the grand final although with two away goals Perth are certainly still well and truly in the tie. Some of the goals were the best seen on an Australian pitch in the last ten years.

It was the team from the west that started the best with Bobby Despotovski putting the ball wide of the far post after a cross from Gary Faria in the opening two minutes of the match.

Parramatta almost responded through Ante Milicic in the fifth minute but overall their first goal in the 9th minute came against the run of play.

Jade North had brought a very busy Simon Colosimo down about 20 metres from goal right in front. Alvin Cecolli took it and it kept low. Jason Petkovic got both hands to the freekick but only managed to push it higher into the back of the net. Game on.

Two minutes later Parramatta almost scored from another freekick, this time in the form of a cross that was cut across the face of goal.

A minute later Clint Bolton slipped in the area and the ball bounced over him but he just managed to push it down with his hands. Five minutes later he was called into action again, this time stopping a shot from Damien Mori after Mori was released onto a good pass by Tom Pondeljak.

Mori had another chance minutes later as he stole the ball off and always reliable Michael Beauchamp and raced goalwards. As he was reaching Bolton he slowed and it gave Beauchamp enough time to track back and recover the ball making up for his previous mistake.

Perth kept up the pressure but they were not coming up with a score. Just after the hour the tide started turning until the 34th minute when Fernando Rech clashed with Jamie Harnwell. Harnwell and Rech clashed with Rech going down (he has a suspected cheekbone fracture and was taken to hospital) and having to be replaced. His replacement was Saso Petrovski and in many ways it changed the match.

Nonetheless it was by no means a softhearted challenge that saw the Brazilian ace come off second best.

One minute after joining the action Petrovski almost put the ball into the back of the net only to tap it into the hands of Jason Petkovic.

In the 37th minute a Lucas Pantelis corner was not successfully cleared and target man Paul O'Grady just headed over the bar.

A minute later at the other end Perth felt they had a penalty claim denied and it fired them up.

Moments later Jade North and Bobby Despotovski demonstrated their frustration in their play on the park and the latter was punished with a yellow card.

In the 41st minute Andre Gumprecht, playing at right back, played the ball to Ahmad Elrich who played it in the middle of the park to Ante Milicic. Milicic played it to Petrovski on the right who turned Jade North twice and fired home, beating Petkovic at the near post. Then four minutes later Peter Zorbas was set up by Petrovski from the left.

The substitute had weighted his pass as his team mates flooded forward to Zorbas just behind them and from twenty metres out Zorbas fired home with a magnificent strike.

Zorbas has had a knack of scoring goals when they count, last year he managed to crack two goals in the NSL Finals series against the now defunct Adelaide City Force - much to many people's reaction, the ground announcer got it all wrong stating that it was Peter's Birthday after scoring his screamer.

It was the culmination of a wonderful half of football.

At half time both coaches made changes, Mich D'Avry in personnel and Nick Theodorakopoulos in tactics. 18 seconds into the second half and it looked like the Perth manager got it most right.

The always dangerous Damien Mori put the ball across the goal for Power skipper Alvin Cecolli to clear poorly and Bobby Despotovski to fire home. Three minutes later substitute Nick Mrdja's shot deflecting off a defender and goes just over the bar.

In the 54th minute Saso Petrovski fired over the bar when he had options either side of him but it was an indication the home side were settling back into the match.

Unfortunately for the locals it was not the case as a Despotovski free kick from the left was headed home at the near post by Jamie Harnwell.

Just before the hour Despotovski was involved in all the action.

First he fired a shot in that came off Bolton only for Cecolli to clear it before Brad Hassell could pounce. Then Ante Milicic broke down the park and Despotovski tracked back to tackle him.

However he was not going to reach it so instead he pulled Milicic down, incurring the wrath of referee Simon Micallef and he was already walking down the tunnel when Micallef produced a second yellow and red card.

Despotovski will be missed in Perth, and as one would say, an experienced NSL campaigner would have thought twice before pulling the shirt.

In the 66th minute Petrovski almost pushed the ball underneath Jason Petkovic but it was cleared away by the Perth defence. Parramatta needed to get another goal and when it came it was worth the wait. In the 74th minute Ante Milicic turned with the ball 22 metres out and fired home the half volley.

It was an absolute magnificent goal that no words could do justice to.

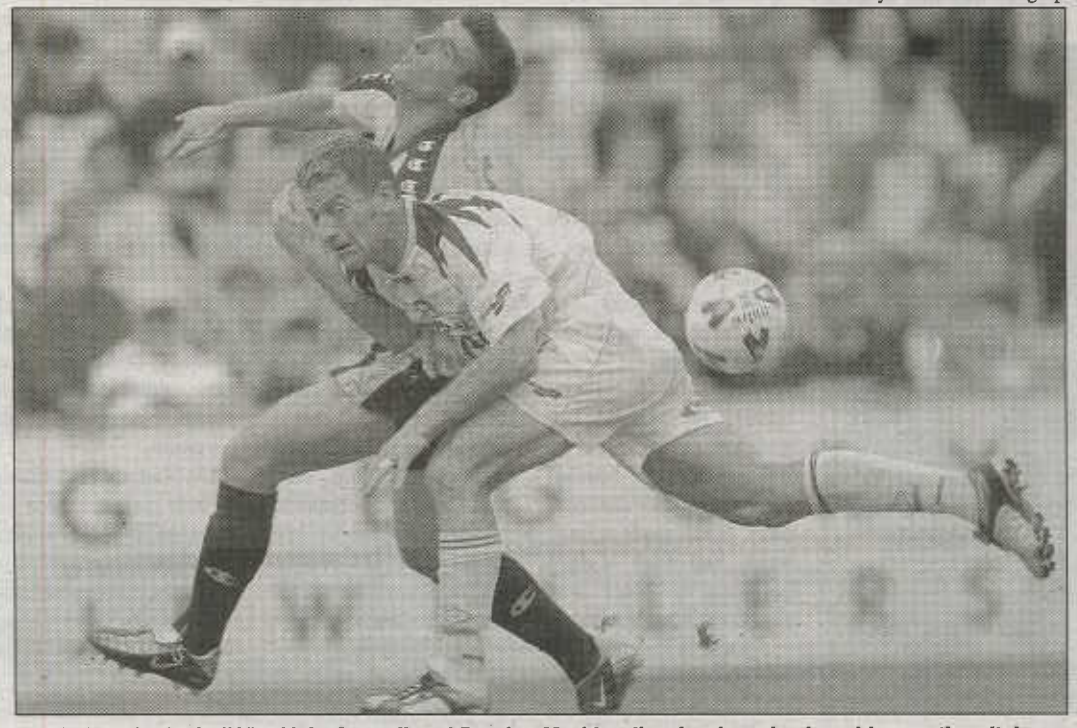
In the closing five minutes Parramatta were presented more chances to Saso Petrovski, Ahmad Elrich and Paul O'Grady in particular but none were converted successfully.

It could have ended badly for the Power though as Matthew Bingley advanced forward, the defence backed off and Bingley's weak shot but it only ended up in Clint Bolton's safe hands.

Coach Theodorakopoulos was disappointed his side did not put Glory to the sword by more and warned that the tie was well and truly not over. He also stated his side would not change the way they played and were confident of scoring again before this tie is over.

The Perth coach was unhappy to have lost 4-2 but said it was an obvious on 3-0 at half time. "Parramatta had their shooting boots on tonight and we have to next week."

Milicic Screamer: Power players celebrate Ante's magnificent long range stinger that left Glory keeper Jason Petkovic dazed.



"Where's the ball?" - Alvin Ceccoli and Damian Mori battling for the prized position on the pitch.

The Lions — 2003 Champions of Queensland
133 Pine Road, Richlands. QLD
Phone: (07) 3271 3636 ● Fax: (07) 3271 3804

QLD Premier League - Round 3

Souths new QLD Giant-Killers

By Glenn Davis

Last year's premier league minnows Souths joined Queensland Lions and Brisbane City as the premier league front runners with a 3-nil win over cellar dwellers Toowoomba at Toowoomba Stadium on Saturday night.

Souths, who narrowly escaped relegation last season, remain unbeaten this year and moved into second place with two wins and a draw courtesy of a Joel Drewek first half goal and a double from Chris Burley after the break.

Drewek's goal five minutes from the interval came against the run of play as the visitors were outplayed in the opening period.

"We were outplayed in the first half but the goal gave us some breathing space," said coach Peter Bannon.

Bannon tipped a bright future for 17-year-old keeper Chris Hogg who again produced another outstanding display in goals.

Burley's first goal soon after the break was right out of the coach's manual to give Souths a 2-nil lead.

"We put four and five passes together and left Toowoomba chasing shadows," Bannon said.

"Burley finished it off with a good clinical strike from 15 metres and it was a joy to watch."

Burley buried any thought of a Toowoomba revival late in the game with another good finish off a strong build up by the visitors.

"It took us six rounds last year before we got our first point," Bannon said.

"This year we've got off to a great start with seven points in three rounds but we're not getting carried and must keep our feet on the ground.

"I don't see us as premiership material by a long way and it's hard to get a handle on what the competition is like other than Queensland Lions and Brisbane City."

Last year's grand finalists Pine Rivers still remain winless after picking up its second point of the season with a late equaliser in a 1-all draw against Palm Beach at Wendy Allison Park on Saturday night.

Palm Beach were unlucky not to snare all three points after being denied what appeared a certain penalty before Darren Bender struck the equaliser in the final minute.

Pine Rivers' coach Clayton Koch drove a long range shot at the Sharks keeper who could only parry it into the path of Bender who tapped home from close range.

Although Koch was thankful for the point, he conceded Palm Beach should have been awarded the penalty.

"A draw was a fair result but they had a chance for a penalty which should have been given," Koch said.

Koch is not yet panicking after the Rivers slow start to the season.

"We were competitive and they were very mobile," Koch said.

"It was a much better performance from us and we're starting to get our players back from injury now.

"We'll get a better guide how we're going against Taringa next week."

Koch expects lanky midfielder Joel Hale will be fit for the Taringa clash despite being replaced with a broken nose.

"Joel broke his nose but he should be right for next week," he said.

"He's only just come back after breaking two toes in his foot."

Palm Beach coach Karl Herdle said he had no doubt his side should have won and a penalty awarded.

"We had enough chances to win two games, and I must admit it really looked like a penalty, it looked like Gavin Peddle was fouled," Herdle said.

"We played well for the first 60 minutes, the football was exciting and we were fast moving and we made fast passes but we couldn't find that important second goal."

Brisbane City coach Frank Pimblett also believed his side was robbed of three points after a scoreless draw with North Star.

Brisbane City's point took it to third on the premiership table with two wins and a draw but trail Souths on goal difference.

But it should have been better for the visitors who had a controversial penalty appeal turned down when former national league veteran Nick Meredith was brought down in the box.

"Nick should have been awarded a penalty," Pimblett said.

"It was one of the most blatant penalties I've ever seen but the referee disallowed it.

"It was like time stood still when it was not awarded."

Pimblett said the decision against awarding a penalty was bizarre but his side should still have won after Pablo Avilles hit the post in the first half.

"It was easier for Pablo to miss than score," Pimblett said.

"I'm happy with the way we've been defending and working so far but we're not putting away our chances.

"It was definitely two points lost."

Pimblett has some praise for his opponents who battled hard.

"We didn't play any worse than in our previous two games but didn't take our chances," he said.

"North Star has improved a lot since last year now that some of the Brisbane Strikers' players have gone over."

North Star coach Ken Swan described the draw as a point won.

"I'm very happy with the point, it's a good result for us and well deserved. I'm hoping it will kick-start our season," he said.

"They are good young kids - our most experienced players, defender Steve Melville and keeper Anthony Hall, have only had two years Premier League experience."

Mitchelton picked up its first premier league win by downing Wynnum Wolves 3-1 at Teralba Park.

Two second half goals from Tim Aldridge propelled newly promoted Mitchelton to its historic win.

Mitchelton scored its first goal at home this season after 20 minutes when Steve Comino knocked the ball into the back of the net following a goalmouth scramble.

Rochedale Rovers 18-year-old keeper David Chambers saw four goals go past him thanks to a resounding victory by last year's champions QLD Lions.

Korean left back Injae Wan then smashed home a 25-metre free kick for Wolves' equaliser five minutes later.

The game was turned on its head in a five-minute spell soon after the restart through Aldridge's double strike.

Aldridge's first came when he chipped the Wolves' keeper from just inside the penalty area before wrapping up the game on the hour when he slotted home from 15 metres for his fourth goal of the season.

Mitchelton coach Greg Brown was extremely satisfied to post the club's first premier league victory.

"I'm delighted, it was good to win, especially after the disappointment of last week," Brown said.

"To beat Wolves shows that we deserve to be here in the Premier League ... we said from the start that the first win under our belt would give us the confidence and to believe in ourselves."

At Jack Speare Park, two headers from striker Shane Coffey continued Easts great start to the season with a 2-1 win over Taringa Rovers.

Coffey opened the scoring on the half hour to take a 1-nil lead to half time, heading home a flick on at the near post.

His double came midway through the second period with another well taken header for a 2-nil, lead before a goal eight minutes from time from Reza Aysen gave Taringa a sniff for the equaliser.

Easts coach Col Bennet said the Tigers had to work hard against an enthusiastic Taringa outfit which is still looking for its first win of the season and is anchored near the foot of the table.

In the main Sunday game, Queensland Lions maintained its unbeaten record to stay at the top of the table with 4-nil over Rochedale Rovers at Lions Stadium.

Premier League

North Star 0 v **Brisbane City 0**
Half-time 0-0
Taringa Rovers 1 (Aysen) v **Eastern Suburbs 2** (Coffey)
Half-time 0-1
Mitchelton 3 (Aldridge 2, Comino) v **Brisbane Wolves 1** (Injae Wan)
Half-time 1-1
Pine Rivers 1 (Bender) v **Palm Beach 1** (Peddle)
Half-time 0-1
Queensland Lions 4 (Di Losa, Tollenaere, Volker, Farinazzo) v **Rochedale Rovers 0**
Half-time 1-0
Toowoomba 0 v **Souths Utd 3** (Burley 2, Drewek)
Half-time 0-1

	P	W	L	D	For	Ag	Pts
Qld Lions	3	3	0	0	13	2	9
Souths	3	2	0	1	7	1	7
Brisbane City	3	2	0	1	6	1	7
Easts	3	2	1	0	6	4	6
Palm Beach	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Mitchelton	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Rochedale	3	1	1	1	4	7	4
Brisbane Wolves	2	1	1	0	3	4	3
Taringa	3	0	2	1	3	6	1
North Star	3	0	2	1	1	5	1
Pine Rivers	3	0	2	1	2	12	1
Toowoomba	2	0	2	0	0	4	0

Premier Reserves North Star 2 Brisbane City 1, Taringa 0 Easts 4, Mitchelton 1 Brisbane Wolves 2, Pine Rivers 2 Palm Beach 4, Qld Lions 3 Rochedale 3, Toowoomba 2 Souths 4

Round 3

Premier Youth North Star 2 Brisbane City 5, Taringa 2 Easts 0, Mitchelton 4 Brisbane Wolves 0, Pine Rivers 1 Palm Beach 3, Qld Lions 4 Rochedale 3, Toowoomba 2 Souths 2

Div 1 Capalaba 0 Ipswich Knights 4, Gap 1 Peninsula 3, Mt Gravatt 2 Redlands 1, Olympic 2 Beenleigh 0, Albany Creek 2 Southside Eagles 5, Rocklea 1 Uni of Qld 6

	P	W	L	D	For	Ag	Pts
Olympic	3	3	0	0	7	0	9
Peninsula	3	2	0	1	9	5	7
S'side Eagles	3	2	1	0	7	4	6
Ipswich Knights	3	2	1	0	6	4	6
Uni of QLD	3	1	0	2	9	4	5
Beenleigh	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
Redlands Utd	3	1	2	0	6	5	3
Mt Gravatt	3	1	2	0	3	4	3
Capalaba	2	1	1	0	2	5	3
The Gap	3	0	1	2	4	6	2
Albany Creek	2	0	2	1	4	9	0
Rocklea Utd	3	0	3	0	2	15	0

Div 1 Res Capalaba 0 Ipswich Knights 3, Gap 0 Peninsula 1, Mt Gravatt 0 Redlands 2, Olympic 3 Beenleigh 3, Albany Creek 2 Southside Eagles 3, Rocklea 0 Uni of Qld 3

Div 1 Yth Capalaba 2 Ipswich Knights 0, Gap 2 Peninsula 3, Mt Gravatt 4 Redlands 2, Olympic 2 Beenleigh 2, Albany Creek 10 Southside Eagles 0, Rocklea 0 Uni of Qld 5

Div 2 Samford 2 Oxley 0, Grange 0 Moggill 1, Brisbane Force 3 Annerley 1, Bethania 4 North Pine 4, Slacks Creek 1 Newmarket 2, Ipswich City 0 Goodna 0

Div 2 Res Samford 2 Oxley 0, Grange 0 Moggill 1, Brisbane Force 3 Annerley 1, Bethania 4 North Pine 4, Slacks Creek 1 Newmarket 2, Ipswich City 0 Goodna 0

Metro 1 Samford 2 Oxley 0, Grange 0 Moggill 1, Brisbane Force 3 Annerley 1, Bethania 4 North Pine 4, Slacks Creek 1 Newmarket 2, Ipswich City 0 Goodna 0

Metro 2 Mooroondu 3 Ridge Hills 1, Redcliffe 1 Brisbane Toro 5, Logan City 10 Brighton 2, Pine Hills 4 Gap 1, Newmarket 3 Pine Rivers 6

Metro 3 Souths 2 Clairvaux 7, Acacia Ridge 1 Easts 6, Pine Hills 1 Darra Lions 5, Newmarket 1 Grange 1, North Pine 0 Bayside 3, Uni of Qld 0 Pineapple Rovers 0

Metro 4 Beenleigh 4 Slacks Creek 4, Acacia Ridge 1 Regents Park 4, Taringa 0 Brisbane Force 4, Gap 0 Old Bridge 4, Newmarket 6 Southside Eagles 0, Mt Gravatt 1 Brisbane City 4

Metro 5 North Star 4 Albany Creek 2, Redlands 2 Clairvaux 2, Newmarket 5 Ridge Hills 0, Annerley 7 Brighton 1, Olympic 1 Slacks Creek 3, Ipswich City 2 Easts 2

Metro 6 Mooroondu 7 Regents Park 1, Brisbane Wolves 2 Camira 4, Goodna 0 Mt Gravatt 5, Albany Creek 2 Park Ridge 0

Open Youth Brisbane Force 5 North Pine 0, Qld Lions v Newmarket (not played), Toowoomba 2 Souths 2, Bethania 2 Rochedale 6, Slacks Creek v Brisbane Toro (not played)

Letters to the Editor/Giveaways

SOCCER SKILLS GIVE-A-WAY

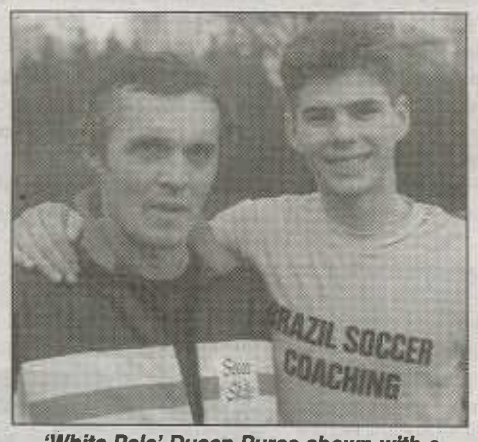
Former Yugoslav superstar Dusan Purac has recently released an instructional video titled ready, set, goal.

To celebrate the release of Dusan's second video *Australian & British Soccer Weekly* will be offering readers a chance to win Dusan's first video Soccer Skills.

Dusan has been a skills coach for over twenty years and strives to teach youngsters to get a feel for the ball so they can perform the breathtaking maneuvers that Zidane so regularly thrills his fans with.

The video also emphasizes Dusan's other philosophies; that soccer skills must be developed in childhood and hard work and perseverance are essential in developing skills and becoming a more proficient soccer player.

For 40 mins Dusan and several boys take us through basic skills such as dribbling, as well as crossing, and step-overs. The video originally released in 1988 features a young Zvonimir Boban and Dejan Savicevic dazzling us with the ball control skills that saw them both become key members of the AC Milan's legendary European Cup winning team of the early 90's.



'White Pele' Dusan Purac shown with a young AC Milan star Zvonimir Boban.

Also Inter's Darko Dancev, former European top junior of the year also features in the Soccer Skills video. For your chance to win one of four of these great videos simply answer the question, who did AC Milan defeat in last season's Champions League final.

Send your answers to *ABSW*'s email address on absw007@hotmail.com titled 'Dusan Purac Competition'.

Good Luck

This weeks winner Kosta Yiatopoulos- Fitzroy- VIC

LE COQ SPORTIF BOOTS GIVE-A-WAY

ABSW in association with French soccer brand Le Coq Sportif are giving you the chance to win soccer boots that will revolutionize the sport as we know it today.

Having started the company back in 1920, Le Coq Sportif has been a major brand in Europe and has kitted the likes of France, Senegal and Greece to name a few along side a string of other European clubs.

Currently kick-starting its promotions in Australia, the brand famous for its Rooster label has given *ABSW* two 'Triatom' soccer boots.

With its orientable and adjustable studs, the TRIATOM TRI MOTION soccer shoe is probably the best soccer shoe in the world and the first shoe, which adapts to the soccer players field position and the pitch.

Question: Name one club (National or Domestic) that is sponsored by Le Coq Sportif and send your answers to our email address on absw@foreignlanguage.com.au

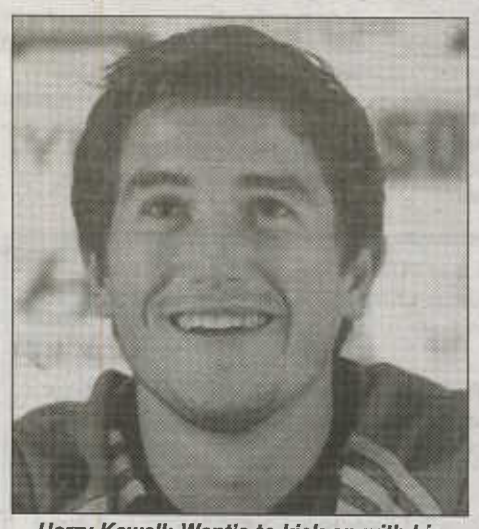
Hurry, you only have one week to do so, get your emails in nice and early for a chance!

KEWELL FACTOR!

Dear Sir,

Surely this Kewell saga has dragged on for two long. With all the problems associated with the game back home, and all the hard work that will have to be put in to make sure the Australian Premier League gets up and running, it is quite ludicrous how much attention has been given to this one single player.

Admittedly, Harry Kewell is perhaps Australia's greatest ever soccer talent, but he is not bigger than the sport, like the way his manager has painted him. The result achieved in Venezuela indicates that the Socceroos is more than a one or two-man show. Australia has at its core a hard-working and determined bunch, with the sprinkling of world class thrown in.



Harry Kewell: Want's to kick-on with his Australian ambition in gulding them to the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The appearances of Kewell on A Current Affair, and Bernie Mandic on SBS, has made me question what these guys are all about. Are they more concerned about the game, or increasing their own inflated public profiles. We should ignore these two, the attention seeking children in the Australian soccer classroom, and get on with trying to improve the fortunes of the code in Australia.

Dean Regis.
Footscray, VIC.

PATIENTS THE KEY TO REFORM

Dear Sir,

The soccer public must be patient with the reform process, as it will take years to bring the sport up to the level of the other football codes, and cricket.

However, I am confident that the sport can attract and convert supporters of other sports. Soccer needs to be promoted as an exciting enterprise, and given Australian fans desire to see big blockbuster contests, soccer should be marketed accordingly.

New ASA CEO John O'Neill will have the task of handling a reform process to help better the game from next year onwards.

By having single teams in the regional centres, the new league will hopefully tap into the whole 'state pride' thing that has seen Rugby

League's State of Origin become a staple part of Australia's culture. Soccer fans around Sydney especially, will be able to unite and support one or two teams, instead of dividing themselves.

As we gradually bring players back from overseas and keep the young talent at home, the APL will become the elite league, and Farina will surely have more cause to select locally based players for the national teams.

And the state league will improve with the addition of some current NSL clubs, and this will mean that attendances at both APL and state level will improve out of sight.

Laurie McManus.
Gladesville, NSW.

WHY PELE?

Dear Sir,

What is the deal with Pele's top 100 living players in the world?

First of all, why was Pele chosen to make this selection, it would have been better had there been a number of greats who combined for this project.

And living players? We can forget about someone like Lev Yashin, the great Soviet Union goalkeeper.

Pele's selection means absolutely nothing, and confirms that people have short memories indeed. To label the likes of Hernan Crespo, Veron, Buffon and Rustu Recber as 'greats' of the game is not fair on them, or on the players who have gone and past. Sure, the players mentioned are all very good, but they still have yet to achieve 'great' things that will endure in our memories for many years to come.

How can Crespo be likened or be on the same wave-length as say Paolo Rossi or Di Stefano?

Let's do away with these nonsense selections, along with the best World XI teams, and simply recognise the different qualities and styles of footballers around the world. This is what makes the game of ours so great.

I have always had the opinion that Pele, a great player nonetheless has always been a 'YES' man for FIFA.

Maradona in my opinion was the greatest player that ever lived.

Due to his bad history – outside of football, the higher powers have swayed away from given this man the recognition he deserves.

Said Tourila.
(email)

MAN U TO FACE GUNNERS!

Dear Sir,

The English FA have done it again, pitting Manchester United and Arsenal

together again in an FA Cup semi-final. This has ensured the prime event in Cardiff in May, will be a farce, with one of the giants of the European game taking on the minnows from the Nationwide league.

Some may say that the romance has returned to the Cup, but I think you will find that the Final will not produce the upset that many may hope for. Man Utd and Arsenal's depth is so great, that they can play second string teams and still win, I feel.

And why are the semi-finals always held in Manchester and Birmingham. What do Chelsea and Arsenal's home ground get overlooked every year? Staging matches in London may well cut out the travel time for supporters in the south of England.

Betty Carson.
Redfern, NSW.

ANIMALS IN OUR SPORT

Dear Sir,

The disgraceful events of the past few weeks in both rugby league and soccer has turned me off the two sports. The cases involving the Bulldogs and Leicester make me wonder how many other issues have been covered up and hidden from the public eye.

These professional footballers have exhibited a clear lack of respect for women and their contracts should be immediately terminated. They have tarnished the sport, but more importantly, they have tarnished themselves, and it must be said, they deserve it.

Players think they above the rules that govern society, simply because they earn millions of dollars kicking a silly football around.

True class does not come from how one bends a free kick, or how many clean tackles one makes, but from what is inside- and this means how they behave and think.

I wonder how many top-class people are involved in sport?

Thanks to these incidents, I have lost interest in sport.

Karen Oswald.
Bass Hill, NSW.

VIERI - ARE WE SERIOUS?

Dear Sir,

Soccer administration may change but not bad old habits. Putting aside the club v country problem it is quite obvious most Oz players wherever only regard a Socceroo shirt primarily as a means to promote their career at club level.

The latest nonsense with Paul Okon and Christian Vieri unknown brother says it all. Paul Okons days as Socceroo are over and this nonsense in the media is more about prolonging Okon' career as a professional football in Europe than what is best for the Socceroos. To compound Okon's problem his failure to endorse the Lowy takeover only undermined his very shaky position further.

Then we had this breathless announcement that Christian Vieri's unknown brother wants to play for the Socceroos.

How many times must it be said if we want the Australian people to take soccer seriously then the people running the game at all levels and all the graded players good, bad or is indifferent must take it seriously.

It happens in all successful Oz sports and its not my opinion but a fact of life.

Christian Vieri's brother could always start a restaurant in partnership with the Labbozzetta family and John Taylor would be the perfect PR manager.

R. Melor,
Bondi. NSW.

UNITED WE STAND

Dear Sir,

Just want to say a big thank-you to all the people that turned up alongside myself at the last Sydney United home-match against the Melbourne Knights.

The atmosphere was amazing, flares everywhere, people chanting, it was a real soccer night, too bad the experts in Australian soccer think that kicking out clubs that maintain a mainstream group of supporters have no place in the new NSL and that these 'new' clubs are set to explode with a new fan base.

Good luck trying to get there ASA - Sydney United For Ever

S. Ivanic
Menai, NSW.

VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2003-04

Veteran Emsovski leads by example as Lions down Greens

Fawkner Blues Scorers: Former Melbourne Knights star Andrew Marth and (insert) Mark Tsiorlas were on the score-sheet.

By Roy Hay

Veteran Chris Emsovski continues to lead Preston Lions to victories by his example and it was his free kick from distance which gave his side the lead over Bentleigh Greens in Round Five of the La Ionica Victorian Premier League on Sunday at Connor Reserve after 52 minutes.

Former South Melbourne youngster Stiven Manceski started on the bench, but when he came on in 67 minutes he was immediately involved, scoring Preston's second goal in the 75th minute. Bentleigh Greens fought hard but its young side could not get any reward for its efforts.

New recruit an ex-Melbourne Knights star Andrew Marth made an immediate impression leading Fawkner Blues to its first win of the season in his return to the side against Knox City at Egan Lea Reserve. Tony Sterjovski got the Blues off to a flyer with a goal in the first minute then Marth got a second after 15 minutes. Anthony Edgar pulled a goal back for the home team in 42 minutes, but the cheers were still going when former Young Socceroo International Mark Tsiorlas restored Fawkner's two-goal cushion a minute later. The second half was a see-sawing affair but neither side was able to trouble the scorers thereafter.

Two penalty goals late in the game by defender Tom Milardovic gave St Albans Saints a slim two-one win over Whittlesea Stallions at Churchill Reserve. Izzy Erdogan had given the visitors the lead in 45 minutes but Milardovic equalised in 68 minutes and then got what turned out to be the winner, also from the spot in 85 minutes.

Green Gully welcomed the return of Andy Vargas with a goal three minutes after being substituted that gave the Cavaliers a two goal victory over the Oakleigh Cannons in round five of the La Ionica Men's VPL.

The match kicked-off and though Gully had the home ground advantage the three points were not guaranteed and it looked as though Gully would have to fight hard to get a win. Oakleigh's hopes were tainted early when in the 16th minute Peter Hader made the most of a Mijo Trudkovic cross that landed at his feet, which he didn't hesitate to put away.

Mid-way through the first half Oakleigh seemed to be getting close to equalising and Nick Marinos was causing all sorts of problems for the Gully backline but his efforts were lacking aim.

At the other end Hader was searching for another goal but was finding it hard to create space for himself as the Oakleigh defence guarded him closely.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
1. Bulleen Zebras SC	4	4	0	0	9	2	12
2. Green Gully Cavaliers SC	5	3	2	0	7	3	11
3. Preston Lions SC	5	3	2	0	7	3	11
4. St Albans Saints SC	5	3	1	1	9	4	10
5. Altona Magic SC	5	3	1	1	8	5	10
6. Frankston Pines SC	5	2	1	2	4	3	7
7. Oakleigh Cannons SC	5	2	1	2	5	7	7
8. Essendon Royals SC	4	1	1	2	2	2	4
9. Whittlesea Stallions SC	5	1	1	3	9	11	4
10. Fawkner Blues SC	5	1	0	4	5	9	-3
11. Knox City SC	5	0	1	4	5	13	1
12. Bentleigh Greens SC	5	0	1	4	1	9	1

The Vargas brothers made their 2004 debut after moving from the Melbourne Knights and Joe Mullen introduced Rod in the 56th minute to strengthen the defence. Andy Vargas made hi appearance in the 72nd minute to replace Nick Tsaltas and it was the dream comeback for A. Vargas who was in the right place at the right time to tap the ball into unguarded goals.

The strengthened Gully outfit looks well organised and could prove an extremely difficult adversary for the young Bentleigh squad. Yesterday's win takes Gully to second place and the reigning champions look set for another good year.

Round 5 Results

Sat, 13 Mar

Altona Magic SC Frankston Pines SC 1 - 0

(Sash Becvinovski 90 minutes)

Sun, 14 Mar

Preston Lions SC Bentleigh Greens SC 2 - 0

(Chris Emsovski 52 minutes, Stiven Manceski 75 minutes)

Knox City SC - Fawkner Blues SC 1 - 3

(Anthony Edgar 42 minutes)

(Tony Sterjovski 1 minute, Andrew Marth 15 minutes, Mark Tsiorlas 43 minutes)

St Albans Saints SC - Whittlesea Stallions SC 2 - 1

(Tom Milardovic 68 and 85 minutes)

(Izzy Erdogan 45 minutes)

Sun, 14 Mar

Green Gully Cavaliers SC - Oakleigh Cannons SC 2- 0

(Peter Hader 16 minutes, Andy Vargas 75 minutes)

Round 6 Fixtures

Fri, 19 Mar, 8:15PM

Oakleigh Cannons SC vs. Knox City SC

Sat, 20 Mar, 5:00PM

Frankston Pines SC vs. Bulleen Zebras

Sun, 21 Mar, 5:00PM

Bentleigh Greens SC vs. Green Gully

Essendon Royals SC vs. Preston Lions

Fawkner Blues SC vs. St Albans Saints SC

Mon, 22 Mar, 8:15

Whittlesea Stallions SC vs. Altona Magic

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2003-2004 NORTHERN DIVISION

CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES RESULTS

PRELIMINARY FINAL - FRIDAY 12 MARCH 2004

Parramatta Power 2
(Robert Younis 12', Simpson 29')

Newcastle United 3
(Wallace 26', Boogaard 62', Mitchell 87')

NORTHERN DIVISION GRAND FINAL - SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2004

Canberra Deakin Vs Newcastle United
Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: Belconnen Sports Centre

Its that time of the year again in the Northern Youth League Division with Minor Premiers Canberra Deakin taking on under-dogs Newcastle United in the last game of the season. The winner advances to play South Melbourne, winner of the Southern Division conference to contest for the right of being known as the best youth squad in Australia.

Last year's champions Parramatta Power were knocked out last week to a determined Newcastle United squad who will have many stars on from its first grade side on hand to face Canberra in the Nation's Capital.

Victorian Chronicles

Harvey Norman ASA Sponsor

It's a done deal according to "reliable sources" at breakfast last Sunday before the Marconi and South Melbourne final.

According to this source, John Singleton has personally negotiated the deal with Gerry Norman, Singleton was the advertising agency for Harvey Norman until this week, when the retail giants broke with convention by taking their massive $15m advertising account in house.

Sources say the Lowy team made sure they had a minimum acceptable level of sponsorship commitments before accepting their challenging posts – a naming rights sponsor is essential for a successful new league.

Bernie Gives A Few Pointers

Located a short cross from Bob Jane Stadium is Melbourne's best restaurant, Donovans, on Jacka Boulevard.

On Thursday night, as the Grand Prix party rolled through Melbourne, Formula 1 Supremo Bernie Ecclestone dined with new ASA Director Ron Walker while many of Melbourne's sporting and business leaders ate on separate tables.

While motor racing was the salient topic for discussion, Ron Walker could benefit from a few pointers from Ecclestone, Formula 1 politics may even rival soccer politics and Ecclestone really knows how to play that game.

That's Commitment

South Melbourne staff member John Caniglia is one committed individual.

As *ABSW* goes to press, access to Bob Jane Stadium remains restricted as the massive concrete barriers required for the Grand Prix remain in place, preventing access to the VIP Car Park and other areas.

But we'll have access on Sunday according to Caniglia who is better respected for his fine taste in motor vehicles.

"I'll move them all my self if I have to" he continued, "we'll get all the VIP's into the carpark" he assured me.

That might be worth seeing, as the prelude to the South Youth team playing rivals Heidelburg before the main game between South and Marconi.

Soccer Thriving in Melbourne

South and Marconi is not the only game in town on Sunday.

Suburban Soccer Clubs across Melbourne commence registration for both Goal Kick – the under eight year old soccer program as well as registration for the under age soccer clubs commences.

Across the state clubs are reporting demand for places outstrips the number of positions available.

Because of the massive demand from the boys and girls, there is a shortage of grounds and suitably qualified coaches.

One club reported pre-registrations (registrations submitted before the registration day) for their Goalkick program tally more than twice the number of available positions. And that's before registration even opens.

This would delight Frank Lowy and his crew, all they need to do is foster this enthusiasm through to national level.

Bad Spirit

Eighteen months ago in *ABSW* I revealed the fact Northern Spirit failed to pay their $250,000 franchise fee following the change of ownership.

While the NSL General Manager refused to take my calls or answer my e-mails on the subject, a "deal" was done enabling the Spirit to defer the payment until 30 June 2003. Allegations abounded suggesting the "deal" was related to the clubs voting intentions.

My questioning of the validity of the "deal" were not answered, the wash up being the fee was not ever collected so the other 12 clubs essentially had to cover the shortfall in this years budget.

I'm wondering if any of the NSL creditors will deem this failure to enforce collection by the former directors as being negligent. And in posing the question I'm only too well aware of the fact the former board didn't purchase Directors Liability Insurance.

Interestingly the Financial Review reported on 11 March that another company owned by the former Spirit owner, a golf resort was placed under external administration this week.

Allardyce Supports ABSW

Maybe *ABSW* is more influential and widely read than we thought.

Following our editorial last week titled Cull Blatter Not Clubs Bolton Wanderers supremo Sam Allardyce has come out in total support of our sentiments.

Blatter is currently in England giving his views on the game, including reducing the number of teams in the Premiership and scrapping cup replays.

"Sepp Blatter? Who is he?" Allardyce told Sky Sport News. "It astounds me somebody like him is the head of football.

"I never have (liked him), never will do.

"I don't think the man knows how the game is run. He thinks he knows better than us in The Premiership but I don't think he's in touch with reality."

Green and Gold Army Series

Green & Gold Army
http://www.gg-army.com

SOCCERNOOS

The Green and Gold Army are pleased to announce that we have secured an exclusive block of seats for the upcoming international at West London's Loftus Road.
Considering the large ex pat communities and tremendous sporting rivalry between the two nations it should be a massive night in London.

@ LOFTUS RD, WEST LONDON
TUESDAY MARCH 30 KO 8PM
QPR Ticketline 44 (0) 870 112 1967
Hours: Mon-Fri 9.30-4.45/Sat 9.30-NOON
In an effort to make the maximum amount of noise and support the boys 100% make sure you purchase your tickets in the Green and Gold Army section of the ground

(Behind the goals - 12 pound each).

To do this you must call the QPR Ticketline on 44 (0) 870 112 1967 and request seating in 'the Green and Gold Army' section.
This offer is only available via the phone and not availalbe on-line so make sure you obtain seats in our section.
The section is open to all so round up your crew and get to the game
(though if you are bringing a non-ggarmy.com registered friends please have them register free before the match).
Our aim is to get everyone in the same t-shirts, offer discounted pub promotions and have everyone singing from the same song sheets to create a fantastic atmosphere.
More news in our bumper Soccernoos due out soon

NB The game is 5am Wed March 31 AEDST

It's nearly sold out so if you know someone who wants to go let them know or the opportunity will pass

Leaked at last - the ASA's Socceroo program

Inflammatory drivel a comic relief from Mark van Aken

In light of Harry Kewell's Manager Bernie Mandic's comments on SBS Television last week, it's time for the ASA to get into gear and design a national program that caters to the Liverpool sharp shooters needs.

While the thoughts and opinions of the other players are to be considered they're merely fodder compared to the wishes of Messrs Kewell and Mandic.

Harry can't make it to the Socceroos matches? Then hell, we'll bring the Socceroos to him. What's better than 11 of Australia's finest prancing through the vast fields of Yorkshire once every few months? I'm sure country's like Venezuela wont mind. Maybe CONMEBOL will allow us to play both legs of the World Cup qualifiers in England come next November.

Harry Kewell has been caught up in controversy with his latest ankle injury.

Hold the phone, that may not be necessary. Apparently Kewell's reported medical condition is only relevant to friendlies. When TWG's Les Murray asked hypothetically if Harry would travel to Japan next month for an international Mandic emphatically answered "NO", shortly followed by "not for a friendly". This being the case this mystery condition apparently only raises its head for so called friendlies, however when the match is of consequence then the swelling and soreness magically subsides.

Call the New England Journal of Medicine we have a new one! Let's just avoid all the fuss'n and a fightin' by caving in and giving HK what he wants. Let's bow to his whims, I'm sure the other Socceroos wouldn't mind. Surely Vince Grella, a guy who flew to Caracas last month with no real hope of playing in the game due to injury but did so in the slightest hope of securing a place in his country's national team would be totally kosher with the whole thing.

So with that cleared up, lets have a look at some potential Socceroos matches for the coming months:

May 10 Aus v Liverpool Academy - to be played in Harry's back yard (NB if the walk out the back is too much Harry, have Bernie contact the ASA team and they will organise a limo from your front door to the back yard)

May 25 Aus v Brazil - hopefully the media spotlight of the samba kings will palate Harry enough to see him make the trip – not a long one mind you, the match is to be played in Harry's rumpus room (Note that due to venue constraints this will be a 5 a side game).

August 11 Aus v Ibiza United 5ths - To accommodate Harry's holiday plans this will be played in the lobby of his 5 star hotel - Don't worry its a big lobby, no 5 a side rubbish here. Luckily the flying time for this is just within the designated threshold before Harry's ankle swelling kicks in, which is good as it saves the ASA needing to book an extra Business Class seat for it.

September 6 Aus v Russia – bit of trip for H this one. The boys can perhaps let him sit it out because lets be honest the match doesn't matter anyway, its only Australia after all-what are they ranked? 82nd in the world. Plus a good team doesn't need to play and train together all the time, slotting someone in who is the offensive focus of the entire line up isn't that important, that can be done anytime.

Further matches are scheduled for later in the year however Harry has informed Frank Lowy and John O'Neill, that the ASA must call in advance and gain clearance from his medical team. As such the ASA is also working to ensure that it schedules no matches within 4-6 weeks of any other soccer match in world, organised or otherwise as not too put undue stress on Harry's ankle.

Dr.Nick Riviera's medical report on HK's troublesome ankle is due shortly, although please be advised that no contents can be revealed or explained in any way shape or form. Note that the umpire's decision is final and no correspondence shall be entered into, for more information log onto

http://www.suspectmedicalconditions.com *or* http://www.timetodrawthelineinthesandandmakeabravedecisionforthebettermentoftheentireteamnaytheentiresportwecantexpecttheotherstoturnuptogamesifweallowthistocontinueandreallythisisthelaststrawandyoucantjustturnupforthelasttwogamesandexpectthistobeacohesiveunitandthinkwhatitsdoingforthemoraleoftheotherblokes.com

VIERI 'GOAL' FOR ROOS

By Mark Stavroulakis

Christian Vieri might have missed the boat in representing the Green and Gold of the Socceroos however younger brother Massimiliano could well be on Frank Farina's squad for the up and coming International fixture against South Africa next month.

Currently playing for the once mighty Napoli in Italy's Serie B, "Max" is the leading scorer for his side and close sources have stated that he's been bent over backwards in wanting to play for Australia.

Socceroo coach Frank Farina, no stranger to Italian football after playing his trade in the boot shaped country, has been following the progress of young Vieri and has stated that the paperwork is almost complete in terms of playing for Australia.

No not Christian but just as talented, Massimiliano Vieri is set to wear the Green and Gold of Australia against South Africa next month.

"He's a big chance of selection", Farina stated to the Daily Telegraph last weekend.

"I've spoken with his manager and he's really keen. I've only seen videos of him but he could prove to be a real asset".

Having played his junior football at Marconi, close family friend Attilio Labbozzetta, brother of former SA chief Tony, stated that "Max" 'is more technical than older brother Christian and has great pace'.

Serie A club Reggina were on the verge of signing young Vieri this season but the offer came too late thus putting 'Max' in the Serie B for another season.

The Vieri family have a rich history when it comes to Italian football.

Calcio (Italian word for soccer), has been running in the Vieri family for quite some time now.

FACT FILE

Name: Massimiliano Vieri
Number: 21
D:O:B: 1 – 9 – 1978
Born: Sydney – Australia
Height: 184cm
Weight: 74 kg

96/97 – Juventus (Serie A) 0 – 0
97-98 – Prato (Serie C-1) 15 – 1
98-99 – Fano (Serie C-2) 22 – 5
99- 00 – Brescello (Serie C-1) 30- 13
00 – 01 – Ancona (Serie B) 25 – 10
01 – 02 – Ancona (Serie B) 36 – 12
02 – 03 – Verona (Serie B) 20 – 6
03 – 04 – Napoli (Serie B) 19 – 3

Roberto Vieri, father of both Christian and Max, was a Juventus and Roma hero back in his hey days while Christian has become one of the most recognizable strikers in the world with current club Inter Milan.

Bearing a slight resemblance to Christian, Massimiliano would certainly be a great coup for the Roos who have been starving of World Cup football since '1974.

It is known from an inside source that he will make a definite move to a Serie A club for next year's competition and that plans have already taken place in signing the 24-year-old in one of the world's best leagues.

Meanwhile in a total U-Turn of the Vieri story above, Lack of communication from Australian management convinced rising Coventry City defender Sean Cooney to accept a call-up to the Republic of Ireland U21 squad last week. "It wasn't really a hard decision because I couldn't really turn down the chance to play internationally against some good teams," Cooney told the West Australian. "And I haven't heard anything from Australia lately."

Cooney was called into the Republic of Ireland squad just a few days before the tournament.

"It was a good experience," he said of the tournament and his debut against Italy last Sunday week.

NSL 2003-2004 SEASON REVIEW

The curtain has fallen on the National Soccer League.

After 28 seasons of competition, the NSL will be disbanded, and replaced by an Australian Premier League.

Where this leaves the current teams, players, coaches, administrators and fans, remains to be seen.

The sport faces an uncertain future.

As the finals enters week two, *ABSW*'s Peter Damalas takes a look back at the thirteen clubs that participated in the final season of the NSL.

By Peter Damalas

1 PERTH GLORY (57 POINTS):

Few would have doubted Perth Glory's ability to challenge for back-to-back titles. Despite losing a host of talented players during the off-season, coach Mich D'Avray had the team grounding out consistently positive results.

The Glory endured a difficult start to the campaign, with the majority of first round matches played away from home. But the results achieved indicated that despite personnel changes, the club has maintained its aura of invincibility.

Organisation and power are the keys to their success, and the second half of the season was a breeze as the team chalked up the wins.

And the goals have been shared around the team, with seven players making positive contributions.

KEY PLAYER: Nick Mrdja

KEY MOMENT: The 4-1 defeat of Parramatta in Round 20

Perth Glory had a new striker that excelled this season in Nick Mrdja.

2 PARRAMATTA POWER (51):

Nick Theodorakopoulos had visions of Grand Final day at the start of the campaign, after an aggressive off-season recruitment drive gave the team a daunting look on paper. The coach was under pressure to bring cohesion to a team brimming with individual talent. Despite a few shaky moments- consecutive losses to Wollongong and Brisbane- the players have lived up to their billing as 'the entertainers', scoring freely and playing an attractive brand of soccer.

Long term Injuries suffered to Andrew Durante and John Buonavoglia tested the depth of the squad, but the players have proved resilient, scraping home results in a handful of high scoring matches at the back end of the season.

KEY PLAYER: Ante Milicic

KEY MOMENT: The 6-0 thrashing of Perth in Round 7

Goal machine – Ante Milicic shown scoring yet another one of his 19 goals this season.

3 ADELAIDE UNITED (40):

The tremendous success on the field have been somewhat overshadowed by the way the sporting public have taken the new club to their hearts.

Adelaide United represented a new beginning for soccer supporters in South Australia.

John Kosmina returned to his home state and has been the major factor in the Team's third place finish. The coach has revived the careers of the Adelaide City players, who were perhaps lacking motivation to continue playing.

United have relied on a strong defence and clinical finishing to bring them into contention for the championship. Difficult to beat at Hindmarsh Stadium and away from home, Adelaide United have been one of the most consistent teams all season.

One such player that has lifted that resurgence has been former U17 Joeys star Fred Agius.

So far, Agius has been tremendous since his return to football and has benefited greatly from the likes of experienced campaigners Carl Veart, Michael Brooks and Aurelio Vidmar.

KEY PLAYER: Carl Veart

KEY MOMENT: The club's first match against Brisbane Strikers

Former Socceroo Carl Veart was one of the main instigators in Adelaide's success this year.

4 MARCONI STALLIONS (38):

An eventful season for one of the traditional powerhouses of the national league. With former player, Jean Paul de Marigny, at the helm, Marconi started well, and were sitting pretty at the top of the league early in the season.

The suspension of inspirational captain, Brad Maloney, for a career threatening tackle on Durante, coincided with a drop in form. The club opted to defer its matches in January due to the selection of four players into the Olyroos squad.

This meant a rigorous schedule of matches in the final month of the regular season, and the Stallions stormed into fourth spot after collecting 17 points from a possible 24. Marconi have been solid at the back and creative up front throughout the season.

KEY PLAYER: Nick Carle

KEY MOMENT: The 2-0 win at Brisbane Strikers in Round 22

Nick Carle's silky skills baffled many NSL defence's this year.

5 SOUTH MELBOURNE (37):

A new look South Melbourne began the season brightly, scoring big wins over Wollongong, Newcastle, Melbourne Knights and Football Kingz, and were at one stage four points ahead of Perth at the top of the ladder.

Despite challenging for a coveted top two finish for most of the campaign, the players' form dipped tremendously as three key injuries contributed to the poor results attained in the final month of the regular season.

Lack of experience at NSL level (the squad contains five debutants) also played a part in the team's demise, but in Stuart Munro, Souths have a coach who is capable of bringing the best out of the players when it matters most.

KEY PLAYER: Vaughan Coveny

KEY MOMENT: The home win against Parramatta Power in Round 14

Kiwi International Vaughan Coveny was amongst the top scorers in the NSL.

6 BRISBANE STRIKERS (32):

The surprise packets of the season. The squad consists of honest, hard-working players, but questions remained as to whether the team had the ability to finish in the top half of the table.

Player-coach Stuart McLaren, at just 28, has brought finals football back to the sunshine state without the resources of the other contenders. The away win over Northern Spirit set the tone for the rest of the season, as the Strikers have been able to pick up points when playing as the underdog.

Like most of the teams in the top six, Brisbane have relied on a sturdy defence and a no-nonsense approach.

Despite losing their last four matches, Brisbane secured their place in the top-six with one round to spare.

KEY PLAYER: Peter Grierson

KEY MOMENT: The 4-2 victory over Parramatta Power in Round 10

Skipper Peter Grierson did his best in helping the Brisbane Strikers cause.

NSL 2003-2004 SEASON REVIEW

7 NORTHERN SPIRIT (30 POINTS):

A disappointing season for a team that was expected to improve on last Season's showing in the finals. The only addition to the squad was energetic midfielder, Wayne O'Sullivan, and after a 4-0 thrashing of Sydney Olympic, the signs looked promising.

However, the exciting strike partnership of Dylan Macallister and Stewart Petrie, failed to prosper in the second half of the season, and it was up to the likes of Adam Kwasnik and Jonathan Richter to score for the traditionally goal-shy team.

Spirit were out of the running weeks before the end of the season, but managed to stage a late comeback and finish in seventh spot after winning its last three matches, including a 2-1 victory at South Melbourne.

Dylan Macallister was one of the Spirit's stand-out players this season.

KEY PLAYER: Noel Spencer
KEY MOMENT: The final match against Adelaide United, Alex Tobin's farewell appearance.

8 SYDNEY OLYMPIC (29):

Last season's grand finalists endured a disastrous off-season in which almost the entire squad of players left the club. As a result, the first half of the season was a write-off as coach Peter Papanikitas drafted in a number of state league players who struggled at the national level.

These losses forced a rethink, and a number of players returned, including playmaker Troy Halpin.

In the second half of the season, Olympic had a settled squad of match-fit players, and played attractive football. Pablo Cardozo rediscovered his scoring touch, which had eluded him early on, and three consecutive wins brought them into contention for the finals. In the end, they fell just short.

Zenon Caravella had a solid year with the Blues in midfield.

KEY PLAYER: Zenon Caravella and Brett Hughes
KEY MOMENT: The 1-0 loss to Marconi Stallions in a deferred Round 18 clash

9 WOLLONGONG WOLVES (57):

An improved performance from last season's wooden spooners. Wollongong have Nigerian striker Chimaobi Nwaogazi to thank for their position on the ladder, his 11 goals included a run of six consecutive matches in which he scored.

Coach John Turner should be pleased with some of the results achieved this season, including two wins in Melbourne, and a win in Sydney and Brisbane.

Their unexpected charge for the top six was halted at home by the Football Kingz, and they seemed to lose hope after this, losing their next four matches before salvaging ninth spot.

There was much more at stake for Wollongong this season, as the future of the region at national league level remains in grave doubt.

Nigerian Goal-Machine Chima Nwaogazi was one of the NSL's finds of the season.

KEY PLAYER: Chimaobi Nwaogazi
KEY MOMENT: Consecutive home wins over Parramatta and Perth in November

10 SYDNEY UNITED (29):

Sydney United deserved more than a finish in tenth spot. Of all the teams in the lower half of the table, United were the team most likely to compete in the finals.

Coach Grant Lee had at his disposal a number of quality defenders, but little choice up front. They failed to score in half of their matches, and scored only one goal in a further six matches.

The inability to find the back of the net was a telling factor in their season.

However, there were a number of positives to come from the season, including the emergence of Labinot Haliti as a quality midfielder and the determination and bravery exhibited by every player during a difficult campaign.

Sydney United had the 'never-say-die' attitude of Mark Rudan to thank for his defensive duties.

KEY PLAYER: Mark Rudan
KEY MOMENT: The 4-2 loss to Perth in the penultimate round of the season

11 NEWCASTLE UNITED (24):

Newcastle's 2003/04 campaign mirrored last season's finals effort. Undefeated after five matches, the wheels well and truly fell off after a heavy defeat in Melbourne.

Newcastle kicked up only rare wins from this point onwards (although they did claim the scalp of Perth Glory), ending the season with a disappointing points tally, which doesn't reflect the exciting young talent at the club.

Injuries certainly did not help Newcastle's chances of reaching the finals, but the strike force must bear the brunt of criticism as the team scored a pitiful 18 goals, the equal lowest tally in the league. The young stars of the team will be better for this experience.

Newcastle's veteran star Scotty Thomas could not swing his side into the finals this year.

KEY PLAYER: Mitchell Johnson
KEY MOMENT: The 4-1 loss at South Melbourne in Round 5

12 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS (23):

Two time champions, the Melbourne Knights, ended their participation in the national league in second last spot.

Despite having the championship winning combination of Andrew Marth as captain, and Ian Dobson as coach, the Knights simply could not sustain a challenge for the finals. It was hoped that the 2-0 win at Olympic would spur the team on, but the inexperience showed as they hit the wall in the next match, comprehensively beaten by Parramatta.

The four and five goal losses to local rivals South Melbourne stung their pride, and the good form shown by Olyroo midfielder Anthony Pelikan was the one bright spark to come from an otherwise disappointing season.

Leading from the front: Knights skipper Andrew Marth played out his final year with the Knights.

KEY PLAYER: Andrew Marth
KEY MOMENT: The final match against rivals Sydney United

13 FOOTBALL KINGZ (15):

Not a great deal was expected of the Kingz this season, and they duly finished with the wooden spoon.

The Auckland based team won only four matches, including the 4-3 victory over the Brisbane Strikers in the final round. Coach Ken Dugdale was dismissed as the team failed to lift itself off the bottom of the ladder.

The signing of New Zealand international Danny Hay in the second half of the season proved to be too little too late, although the win over South Melbourne dented that team's finals prospects and gave the Kingz hope that they might avoid the wooden spoon.

Heremaia Ngata top scored with eight goals. New Zealand are guaranteed one team in the APL, and this should lift the spirits across the Tasman.

KEY PLAYER: Heremaia Ngata
KEY MOMENT: The 2-0 win over South Melbourne in Round 24

It was another disappointing season for the Kingz with striker Harry Ngata the only player to gain some attention from Kiwi squad.

National Soccer League

Homeart Final Series 2003-04

Major Semi-Final 1st Leg

Parramatta Power 4 vs Perth Glory 2

Parramatta Power 4 (A Ceccoli 9', S Petrovski 41', P Zorbas 45', A Milicic 75')
Perth Glory 2(B Despotovski 46', J Harnwell 56')

Referee: Simon Micallef. **Crowd:** 6,059.**Venue:** Parramatta Stadium.
Teams: Parramatta Power: Bolton, Ceccoli, Colosimo, Beauchamp, Gumprecht, Milicic, Rech (Petrovski 36'), Pantelis (Dodd 69'), O'Grady, Elrich, Zorbas (Thompson 85')
Subs Not Used: Sobczyk, Beltrame (gk).
Perth Glory: Petkovic, Bingley, Hassell, Murphy, Despotovski, North, Pondeljak (Mrdja 46'), Mori (Byrnes 79'), Faria (Caceres 46'), Harnwell, Coyne.
Subs Not Used: Srhoj, Matassa (gk).
Cautions: T Pondeljak (PG) 14', B Despotovski (PG) 38'.
Red Cards: B Despotovski (PG) 60'.

Elimination 2nd Leg

Brisbane Strikers 4 vs Adelaide United 1

Brisbane Strikers 4 (W Moon 45', J Rose 58', L Brain 82', P Grierson 87')
Adelaide United 1 (C Veart 65')
(Adelaide United wins 4-4 on away goal ruling)

Referee: Matthew Breeze. **Crowd:** 2,790 .**Venue:** Perry Park.
Teams: Brisbane Strikers: Higgins, McLaren, Grierson, Fitzsimmons, Webber, Brownlie (Hilton 86'), Brain, Pilic, McKay, Moon, Morley (Rose 56').
Subs Not Used: Scuderi, Peltohawa, Kearton (gk).
Adelaide United: Scarsella, Alagich, Goulding, Valkanis, Aloisi, Terminello (Demourtzidis 46'), Veart, Vidmar, Thompson (Kemp 73'), Agius (Westervelt 61'), Budin.
Subs Not Used: Brooks, Bajic (gk).
Cautions: W Moon (BS) 2', M McKay (BS) 21', M Valkanis (AU) 9'.
Red Cards: P Grierson (BS) 90', E Demourtzidis (AU) 80'.

Elimination 2nd Leg

South Melbourne 2 vs Marconi Stallions 0

South Melbourne 2 (M Curcija 20', 60')
Marconi Stallions 0
(South Melbourne wins 2-0 on aggregate)

Referee: Mark Shield. **Crowd:** 5,500. **Venue:** Bob Jane Stadium.
Teams: South Melbourne: Galekovic, Osman, Storey (Lia 89'), Panopoulos, Kovacevic, Coveny, Boutsianis (Durakovic 76'), Laurie, Murdocca, Curcija (Tunbridge 82'), Poutakidis.
Subs Not Used: Sarkies, Theoklitos (gk).
Marconi Stallions: Turnbull, Longo (Brodie 69'), Costanzo, Casserly, Last (Anabalon 82'), Gibson, Spiteri, Brosque, Thwaite, Carle, Renaud (Webb 73')
Subs Not Used: Cotte, Alogdellis (gk).
Cautions: M Curcija (SM) 64', B Renaud (MS) 64'.

FIXTURES

Major Semi-Final - 2nd Leg
Saturday 20-3-2004
Perth Glory vs Parramatta Power
7 PM - Members Equity Stadium

Minor Semi-Final
Saturday 20-3-2004
Adelaide United vs South Melbourne
7.30 PM- Hindmarsh Stadium
Preliminary Final - 28th March
Grand Final - 4th April

FINAL SERIES SCORERS

Name	Club	Total
Veart Carl	Adelaide Utd	2
Curcija Michael	South Melbourne	2
Agius Fred	Adelaide Utd	1
Brooks Michael	Adelaide Utd	1
Zorbas Peter	Parramatta Power	1
Petrovski Saso	Parramatta Power	1
Milicic Ante	Parramatta Power	1
Ceccoli Alvin	Parramatta Power	1
Despotovksi Bobby	Perth Glory	1
Harnwell Jaime	Perth Glory	1

National Soccer League

Final Table	TOTAL							PTS	HOME						AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	Bye	F	A		P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A
PERTH GLORY	24	18	3	3	2	56	22	57	12	11	1	0	33	6	11	7	2	3	23	16
PARRAMATTA POWER	24	16	3	5	2	58	30	51	12	9	2	1	39	13	12	7	1	4	19	17
ADELAIDE UNITED	24	11	7	6	2	28	25	40	12	6	4	2	12	10	12	5	3	4	16	15
MARCONI STALLIONS	24	10	8	6	2	29	25	38	13	7	3	3	14	9	11	3	5	3	15	16
SOUTH MELBOURNE	24	11	4	9	2	39	20	37	11	8	0	3	28	11	13	3	4	6	11	9
BRISBANE STRIKERS	24	9	5	10	2	28	33	32	12	7	3	2	16	9	12	2	2	8	12	24
NORTHERN SPIRIT	24	9	3	12	2	31	33	30	12	6	2	4	20	13	12	3	1	8	11	20
SYDNEY OLYMPIC	24	7	8	9	2	26	29	29	12	4	4	4	13	12	12	3	4	5	13	19
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	24	8	5	11	2	34	41	29	12	3	4	5	18	17	12	4	2	6	16	24
SYDNEY UNITED	24	7	8	9	2	18	25	29	12	4	5	3	14	11	12	3	4	5	4	14
NEWCASTLE UTD	24	6	6	12	2	18	33	24	12	5	2	5	11	10	12	1	5	6	7	23
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	24	6	5	13	2	21	41	23	12	2	4	6	11	20	12	4	1	7	10	21
KINGZ	24	4	3	17	2	25	51	15	12	3	1	8	16	25	12	1	2	9	8	27

Coaches face of the t

LAST NSL SHOWDOWN

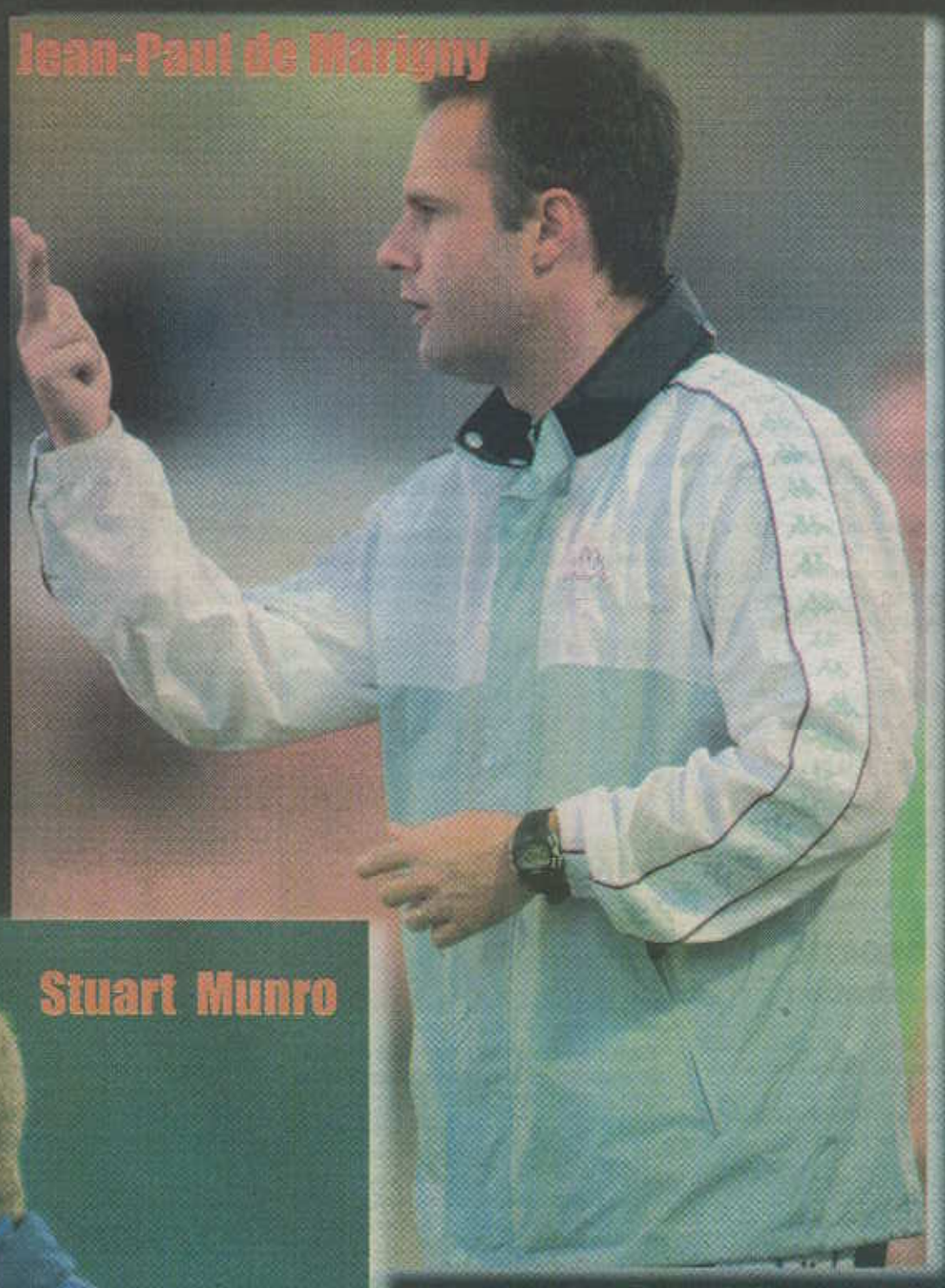
Mich D'Avray

Nick Theodorakopoulos

John Kosmina

t in the hunt for itle

Luciano Trani



Jean-Paul de Marigny

Stuart Munro

LAST NSL SHOWDOWN

from the dressing sheds

by Mark Stavroulakis

Five Months till Kick-Off

August this year will play host to the most watched sporting spectacle in the world, the Olympic Games.

Held in the ancient beautiful city of Athens, there will be a number of Australian representatives doing this country proud in almost every sport played.

One in particular, football.

The Olyroos will be on show in Greece showcasing their best against the best for a hopeful medal at the Games.

Any colour medal would suit coach Frank Farina fine, provided the squad was picked accordingly.

At this current stage, many of the past Olyroo squad that qualified for the Games have or will be in hibernation until the big event.

Why?

No competitions will be played, unless of course they take part in their respective state league division from across the country.

This is something that should be mönitored and fixed by Farina.

Keeping the local boys selected for the Olyroos fit should be Farina's main aim at this stage.

A recent article in TribalFootball stated their desired starting eleven squad for the Olyroos.

Opting for a 3-5-2 system, this is what they stated on their website.

Brad Jones (GK)

(DEFENDERS) Ljubo Milicevic – Craig Moore – Adrian Madaschi

(MIDFIELDERS) Patrick Kisnorbo – Marco Maisano – Luke Wilkshire – Harry Kewell

(STRIKERS) Mark Viduka – Scott McDonald.

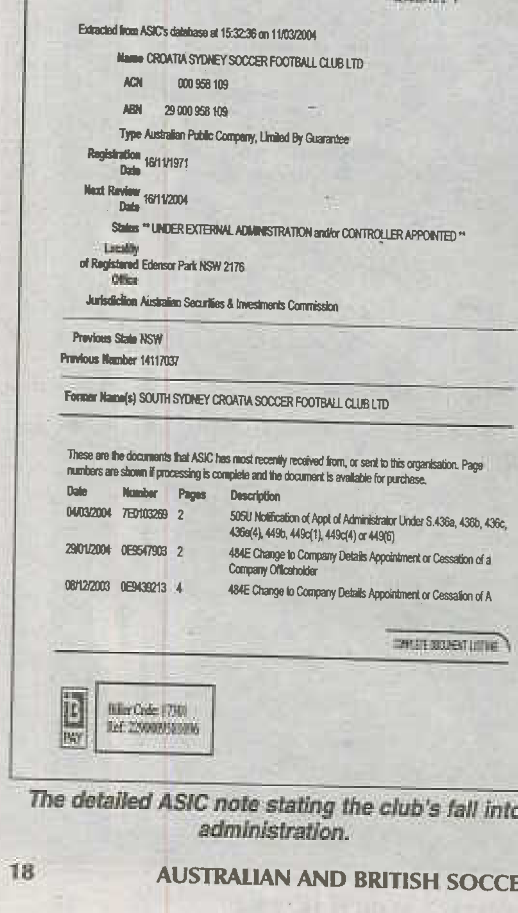
Where are the likes of Brett Holman, Nick Carle, Ahmad Elrich, Dylan Macallister and Co???

Don't know about their squad, but rest assured, many opinions will be expressed as to who should make the final squad that's for certain.

Sydney CROATIA in Administration

Below is a detailed letter of the ASIC website explaining the seriousness the Sydney Croatian football club is currently in.

Looking at the status bar, "UNDER EXTERNAL ADMINISTRATION" is what's noted.



ASIC
Australian Securities and Investments Commission

National Names Index
Index of corporate and business names

Extracted from ASIC's database at 15:32:36 on 11/03/2004

Name CROATIA SYDNEY SOCCER FOOTBALL CLUB LTD
ACN 000 958 109
ABN 29 000 958 109
Type Australian Public Company, Limited By Guarantee
Registration Date 16/11/1971
Next Review Date 16/11/2004
Status ** UNDER EXTERNAL ADMINISTRATION and/or CONTROLLER APPOINTED **
Locality of Registered Office Edensor Park NSW 2176
Jurisdiction Australian Securities & Investments Commission

Previous State NSW
Previous Number 14117037

Former Name(s) SOUTH SYDNEY CROATIA SOCCER FOOTBALL CLUB LTD

These are the documents that ASIC has most recently received from, or sent to this organisation. Page numbers are shown if processing is complete and the document is available for purchase.

Date	Number	Pages	Description
04/03/2004	7E0103269	2	505U Notification of Appt of Administrator Under S.436a, 436b, 436c, 436e(4), 449b, 449c(1), 449c(4) or 449(6)
29/01/2004	0E9547903	2	484E Change to Company Details Appointment or Cessation of a Company Officeholder
08/12/2003	0E9439213	4	484E Change to Company Details Appointment or Cessation of A

The detailed ASIC note stating the club's fall into administration.

POSTECOGLOU STILL COACH?

Close sources have suggested that Ange Postecoglou is still running the show for both the U17 and U20 National Teams it was discovered last week.

It is believed that an U20's camp will be organized in the next few months.

Speculation grew rampant that Ange was to be given the axe after some poor results with his last National sides.

However, it is believed that the former South Melbourne coach will be given one more chance to prove his critics wrong.

ABSW left messages on Ange's phone for more information but no calls were returned. Rest assured, the Weekly will get the scoop on what his situation is.

A KNIGHT TO REMEMBER

Some weeks back, many Melbourne supporters of the Knights will remember the spectacles that followed after their final match against fellow brother side Sydney United.

Flare mayhem at the final match between the Melbourne Knights and Sydney United.

In what was to be the final match for the two sides in the NSL, many tears were shed as both sides said 'bye bye', to the NSL 8423 hardcore supporters to be concise made the trek to Knights Stadium.

It was believed that many Sydney United supporters made the long trip down to chilly Melbourne to wish their team farewell.

Patriotism towards their beloved side was surely on hand that Sunday afternoon.

An electric atmosphere with flares, chanting, and yet more flares surrounded Knights Stadium.

Two vocal Sydney United supporters, Adriana from North Ryde and Jasmina, stated their view of the day.

"It was amazing seeing so many people at both clubs' final match. It was a fun but sad day. I had mixed emotions about the event. I knew that when the final whistle blew, that was it on both clubs. I'll never forget what happened after the game ended. Knights and United supporters rushed onto the field to say their farewells to their players and the club. I know the NSL will be losing two great sides".

A noticeable sign at Knights Stadium from one angry supporter was "DEATH TO THE NSL".

Many on-lookers believed that the new structure of the APL will be nothing more than a failure.

It was a shame that the same result, crowd wise was not seen at the final match between Sydney Olympic and South Melbourne.

Enriched with a Greek background, OKI Jubilee Oval only managed to get 3,682 to the ground, a far cry from the Melbourne effort.

One thing's for sure, the competition has surely lost not just these two traditional clubs, but many more have followed in their footsteps.

Whether this is for the better of the game, no one knows.

Carle and Co Opt for APL

Many of Australia's leading talents have stated that they're willing to wait for the new APL season to start rather than heading off to Europe.

Marconi Stallions leading player Nick Carle, a current Socceroo, spent two seasons in the French First Division with Troyes before returning home to Sydney stated he will give the new league a try.

"Everyone's trying to get to Europe, but if this new league gets up there's more options for us players to stay home, make a living, enjoy your football and get the crowds in".

"Not all the players who come through the ranks have to go overseas. I feel my option to come back home has paid off. It's a lot better to be playing regular first-team at home than not at all", Carle stated to AAP.

The 22-year-old has been troubled with a re-occurring knee injury, but has been in fine tune with practically one leg this season.

Apart from Carle, it is believed that stars such as Ahmad Elrich, Simon Colosimo and Alex Brosque to name a few are keen on staying in the APL.

Its no secret that there has been a number of youngsters returning down-under after failed attempts in Europe.

For whatever reason, it's evident that it isn't as easy to make the step up to overseas standards as many youngsters believe so in this country.

The only problem many of the NSL players face is when will the ASA make the final decision as to which clubs will be in the competition next season and what month will they start?

This has added a headache to the hundreds of players who will be without a job until a result is finalised with the new clubs.

BLUES GETTING STRONGER

After being exclusively stated in *ABSW* last week about the emergence of new APL club the Sydney Blues, the office has been inundated with a number of phone calls concerning the new club.

It is known that former Olympic Sharks chairman Nick Politis alongside ex-Olympic General Manager Peter Raskopoulous will be heading the new venture.

Look to see Ante Milicic, Ante Juric, Simon Colosimo, Ahmad Elrich, Joel Griffiths and Nick Carle to name a few possibly wear the new Blues jersey at the SFS next season.

The Sydney Blues, coming to the APL real soon!

O'NEILL WINS SPORT EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Australian Soccer Association (ASA) newly appointed Chief Executive, John O'Neill has again been recognised as Australia's leading sports' manager by winning the Australian Sport Awards 2003 Sport Executive of the Year, for the second consecutive year.

John O'Neill, who was nominated along with Wayne Jackson (AFL) and David Gallop (NRL), was announced as the winner of the prestigious award at a gala function held at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre in Sydney overnight.

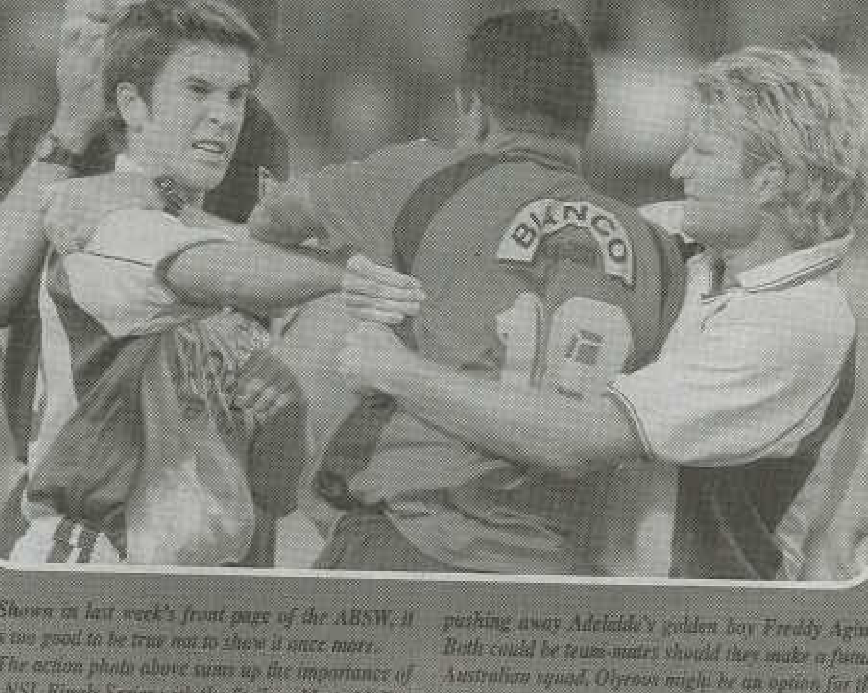
The award has recognised the work of John O'Neill as Managing Director & CEO of the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) during 2003, in particular the success of the Rugby World Cup held in Australia at the end of last year that was generally received as the best-ever Rugby World Cup held.

Following the appointment of John O'Neill to take charge of ASA, the award is further recognition of John O'Neill as the premier sports executive in Australia and why he was the man chosen by ASA Chairman Frank Lowy to oversee the revitalisation of soccer in Australia.

"I'm honoured to receive the award again, but would like to pay tribute to all those people who assisted me greatly in my work with the ARU and specifically, the Rugby World Cup last year," said ASA Chief Executive John O'Neill.

"This award is recognition of the work of many individuals, including volunteers and players, who contributed to the successes of last year, however I now have a great opportunity to help Australian soccer along a similar path of growth and unity and, with the assistance of Frank Lowy and his board, the management team and staff at ASA, I am really looking forward to meeting the challenges and helping soccer in Australia."

photooftheweek



Shown on last week's front page of the ABSW, it was too good to be true not to show it once more.

The action photo above sums up the importance of the NSL Finals Series with the Strikers Matty McKay pushing away Adelaide's golden boy Freddy Agius. Both could be team-mates should they make a future Australian squad. Olyroos might be an option for the pair?

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE

Crescent Cans the Saints in Shock Upset

Sydney Crescent Star	3
St George Saints	0

By Paul Goodwin

Sydney Crescent Star pulled off what may be the upset of the season with a resounding three-nil win over St George at Lidcombe Oval on Sunday night.

Fresh from their triumph at Bonnyrigg eight days earlier the home side slowly but surely got the measure of the Saints to post a victory, and put themselves in the running for Finals' football at the end of their first Premier League season.

With a team barely altered since the Winter Super League - Orhan Dincer and Tolgay Ozbey replacing Tanju Balabanel and Devrim Huseyin the only notable changes - Crescent Star have shown their ability to match it with the best at the Premier level and are now getting into top gear for the run home.

'Point blank': Saints keeper Ricardo Patrizi diving at a Orhan Dincer strike

New striker Stuart Young and his partner Bruno Beddoni were well contained by the hard working defence of Crescent Star and the only real chances of the half seemed to come at the other end of the field.

Filip Marzec blasted over the bar in the opening moments and then in the 26th minute St George keeper Ricardo Patrizi had to rescue his side with a save at point-blank range from Dincer. Dincer had been on the end of a great run-and-cross from Ozbey at the far post, after the latter had made a surging move down the right which cut the defence apart.

Ozbey also had a well-struck free kick that deflected over the bar for a corner in the 34th in a first-half of few real chances.

Only a minute or so after the restart 17-year-old Ozbey was again tormenting the Saints' defence. He forced Patrizi to tip his angled shot away for a corner and in the ensuing passage of play Filip Marzec found himself able to get past Vince Savoca and find the net from the edge of the box.

Patrizi managed to get a glove on the shot but he could not stop it going in the net. This 49th minute goal was ominous and came as no great surprise to those at the game, who had seen the home side's confidence grow as the match wore on.

Five minutes later home supporters were on their feet again as a cross from the right was not cleared by the St George defence.

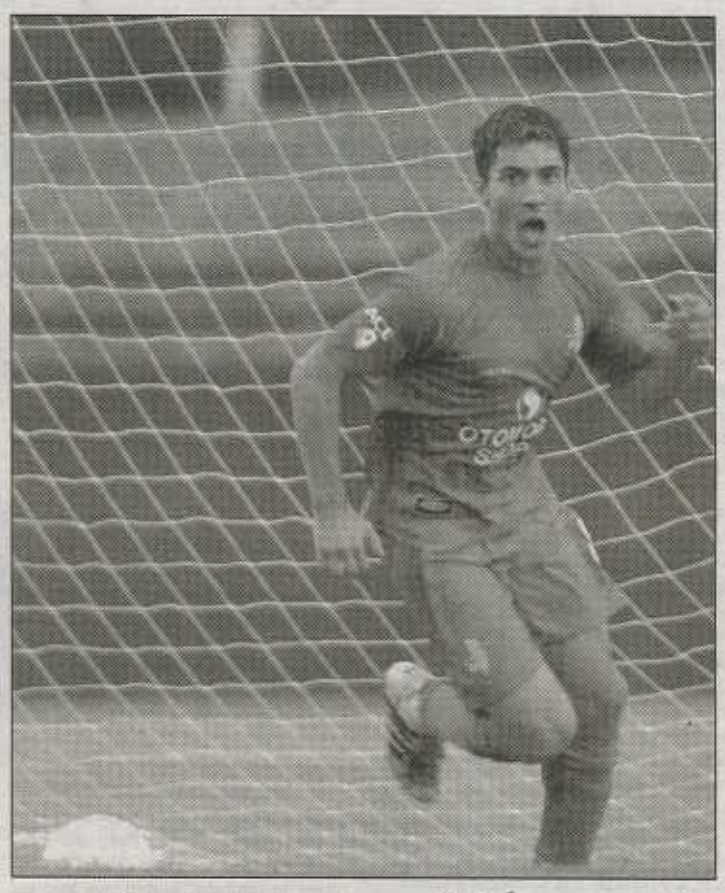
Ozbey, not just a fast runner but a sharp shooter as well, latched onto the loose ball that sat up invitingly for him on the edge of the box and slammed it into the roof of the net.

Apart from a looping header from substitute Daniel Watkins in the 61st the visitors were not providing much of a threat and the Crescent Star defence was organised enough to deal with anything the Saints could come up with.

Patrizi was kept busy, saving fine shots from Anthony Hartshorn and Yavuz Ekinci, before the locals managed to get the ball in the net again in the 78th, only for the goal to be disallowed for offside.

Ozbey had the initial shot, that was pushed away by the keeper, but Michael Cindric, who had been in an offside position and was first to react to the rebound, was unable to claim a legitimate goal as he bundled the ball over the line.

Ozbey strolled past Mirko Jurilj and was then able to steer the ball across to the far post for a simple finish by Shane Hammond, who had come on just moments before and scored with his first touch.



"We spoke about what we had to do ... they needed to believe in themselve and play with their hearts": Crescent coach Yasin Ozdenak

SYDNEY CRESCENT STAR 3
(F Marzec 49', T Ozbey 54', S Hammond 92')
ST GEORGE SAINTS 0
at Lidcombe Oval, Auburn.

SYDNEY CRESCENT STAR: Vanja Ivesa, Evangelos Petratos, Askin Oygur, Ugur Tokdogan, Joe Bruni, Anthony Hartshorn (Terry Atsas), Yavus Ekinci (Shane Hammond), Filip Marzec, Daniel Willoughby, Orhan Dincer (Michael Cindric), Tolgay Ozbey
Subs not used: RGK Wojtek Zarzycki, Hakan Sevgin
Coach: Yasin Ozdenak

ST GEORGE SAINTS: Ricardo Patrizi, Simon Verrender, Dean Culina (Anta Deur), Mirko Jurilj, Ivan Zelic, Cristian Cevanini (Daniel Watkins 56), Vince Savoca, Raphael Bove (Adrian Webster 90), Gabriel Mendez (C), Bruno Beddoni, Stuart Young
Sub not used: Sacha Kepreotis (RGK), Max Sevares
Coach: Manny Spanoudakis

Referee: Srebre Delovski
Assistant Referees: Ken Sharp and Richard Keep
Fourth Official: Michael Collins
Yellow Cards: Sydney Crescent Star: Anthony Hartshorn 40'; St George: Vince Savoca 74'

Devils a little blue after Eagles fight

Belconnen Blue Devils	1
Parramatta Eagles	0

By Paul Goodwin

The Belconnen Blue Devils had to fight all the way on Saturday night to come up with a far from convincing one-nil win over a tenacious Parramatta Eagles at McKellar Soccer Centre.

The Blue Devils started at a thunderous pace and after only three minutes Ilija Prenzoski hit a blistering shot from thirty yards that Parramatta keeper Peter Munsie could only watch, as the ball was deflected into the net.

The Belconnen faithful sat back, expecting an avalanche of goals, but this time it did not happen.

Certainly Belconnen pressed for the next 15 minutes, with Prenzoski, Daniel Macor, Anthony Galliozzi and Alex Castro all searching for a second.

But the Eagles' defence, well led by Daniel Borg and Matthew O'Shea, held firm despite handing the ball to the Belconnen midfield time after time.

Belconnen's Elliott Zwangobani must have thought he had a red and white striped shirt on, the number of times the Parramatta defence laid the ball precisely to his feet. After fifteen minutes, though, Belconnen seemed to catch the Parramatta disease and the game for a long spell drifted into a zone where passes were continually going astray.

It was during this time that Mikey Katz, so often the catalyst for good energetic displays by Belconnen, burst into life.

Katz began taking advantage of open spaces on the right wing and, fed with passes by Castro, Zwangobani and Arranz, he sent over numerous dangerous. *(continued on page 20)*

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PRODUCTION: Mary Quartly
EDITOR: Dylan Welch
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Kyle Patterson
PHOTOGRAPHY: Carlos Furtado
● *All information is courtesy of SOCCER NSW*

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● FTS/Winter Super League P24
● Continental Tyres Cup P25
● Motor Accident Authority Launch P26

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Just past the post: Belconnen

(Continued from page 19)

crosses which his follow strikers could not get to or which Munsie effectively dealt with.

For Parramatta, Richie Cardozo was receiving plenty of ball and although not looking as dangerous as Katz, was beginning to nag at the defence of Adrian Dowling and Lee Pietrukowski.

In the 12th minute Macor blasted a volley way over from a corner, and it was only now that Parramatta began to believe that they could snatch a point from this game if they really wanted it.

But they didn't count on Belconnen's veteran keeper and captain, Anthony Giannasca. For twenty minutes Giannasca belied his age as he reacted brilliantly to deflections, displayed immense courage saving a number of times at the feet of Cardozo, Nathan Rivera and others and it seemed as if his performance lifted the wilting Blue Devils as the game wore on.

Many of the home supporters were now looking decidedly nervous as the Eagles made a number of good chances and even Giannasca was a spectator as the Belconnen defence went to sleep at a free kick and a neat pass saw Ben Delicata hit a screamer which cannoned of the angle of the post and crossbar.

Parramatta at this stage probably deserved an equalizer. But it never came, as the experience of the Blue Devils told in the final 15 minutes when they effectively closed the game off to protect their three points.

Realistically they could have scored a couple more. Parramatta had thrown everything at Belconnen and could find no more in the arsenal, and in the 77th minute Macor superbly held off three Parramatta defenders on a strong run into the box and brilliantly set up Prenzoski. But instead of controlling the ball and running it into the net, Prenzoski hit it first time and the ball went sailing well over the bar.

Five minutes later Katz went on the last of his right wing runs and his deadly cross was very well cleared for a corner by Borg.

After the game Tanzey said that he was grateful for the three points but was very disappointed that his team had not been able to take advantage of a number of "gilt-edged chances."

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS 1
(I Prenzoski 3')
PARRAMATTA EAGLES 0
at McKellar Soccer Centre, McKellar.

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS: Tony Giannasca (C), Lee Pietrukowski, Adrian Dowling, Toplica Popovich, Oscar Zamora (David Arranz), Alex Castro, Elliot Zwangobane, Mike Katz, Ilija Prenzoski, Anthony Galliozzi (Adam Williams), Daniel Macor
Subs not used: Jimmy Carr (RGK), Patrick Lloyd, Michael Spaleta
Coach: Chris Tanzey

PARRAMATTA EAGLES: Peter Munsie, Mark Reveley (C), John Kelso, Matthew O'Shea, Daniel Borg, Ben Delicata, Matthew Clowes, Anthony Mittiga (Rod Hutchinson), Nathan Rivera, Andy Kane (Ismael Arrarte), Richie Cardozo
Subs not used: RGK Ben Paneccasio, Matthew Rosier, Paul Down
Coach: Trevor Morgan

Referee: Les O'Donoghue
Assistant Referees: Niraj Lal and Nik Schie
Fourth Official: Bill Simeonovic
Yellow Cards: Belconnen: Anthony Galliozzi 37', Elliott Zwangobani 53', David Arranz 89'; Parramatta: Anthony Mittiga 53', Matthew O'Shea 89',

Bonnyrigg burn the Coast

Central Coast United	Colorbond	0
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	mr.mobile	5

By Paul Goodwin

Bonnyrigg got their season back on track with a resounding five-nil win at the expense of the very youthful Central Coast United at Pluim Park on Saturday night.

They did so after a midweek 'rev-up' from coach Gordon Brown who had been horrified to learn of his team's loss at home to Crescent Star the week before during his absence.

This time there was no mercy shown to the opposition with every man playing his part and the side looked every inch finals contenders.

The players moved the ball around well, attacked with relish and defended with a sense of purpose and excellent organisation and discipline.

The game was only eight minutes old when the White Eagles took the lead.

Jimmy Aschner benefitted from a probing ball down the right that cut through the Coast defence, leaving him with the chance to deliver a perfect cross to the far post for Aaron Burgess to volley past Matthew Trott.

After that the pressure was relentless, with former Coast man Shane Knight, recent signing Sam Larocca and Brad Groves having dominant roles in the home side's demise.

The Coast boys showed their inexperience and failed utterly to control possession, leaving front runners Nathan Byrn and Peter Haynes to look for their own chances.

Byrn, in particular, worked very hard and had a strong game but few of his team mates did. 17-year-old Robert Russell made his debut and did well in the circumstances but this was not a vintage effort from the dark blues whose keeper Trott also made many fine saves but was constantly exposed.

In the 31st minute Shane Knight was fouled after setting off for goal in tandem with Burgess.

The free kick was driven expertly around the wall and into the centre of the goal by Larocca, low and hard for the visitors' second goal.

Ten minutes later they made it three-nil when a high ball into the box by Vuko Tomasevic was sent past Trott by ace marksman Aschner with a looping header.

But Brown was not satisfied with three and rang some changes in the second-half as his side began to get into an attacking rhythm.

Off came injury prone defender Devrim Huseyin and Aschner to be replaced by Fernando Pellegrino and Alex Canak.

Both players distinguished themselves when in the 71st a great run down the right by Pellegrino, who had been set free by Groves, ended at the by-line with a superb cross that had the Coast defence caught flat footed at the near post.

Larocca arrived with a well-timed run to slam in number four in clinical fashion and that was the indication that Brown's substitutions had done their job.

If any more proof were needed Groves then found Knight over on the left in the 77th and the Bonnyrigg skipper sent over an inch perfect cross to the far post for Canak to head home easily.

While Burgess had missed a sitter soon after opening the scoring for his side and Aschner had been denied by the keeper it might well have been double the five-nil it finished, such was the dominance of the visitors on this occasion.

The Coast side has rarely played this poorly and once again was badly trounced in front of their own supporters.

Central Coast coach Jim Foley was a very disappointed man by the end of the game.

"The standard of play was severely lacking for this level of competition. There was very little about tonight's performance to speak highly about," he said.

"One exception was goalkeeper Matthew Trott, who has simply had a superb season and is surely one of the emerging talents of the game.

"Had it not been for Trott the score-line may have been significantly worse."

But on the other side of the oval Brown was smiling broadly.

"We have a midweek cup game against Liverpool Bossy to consider now and that is why I took off some players, as much as anything," he said.

"Last time we had a midweek cup game we found our next league match at the weekend a lot tougher than we realised and I needed the players to put in a big one for me tonight.

"They kept it tight, like I asked them to and there was good cohesion. Shane Knight was outstanding. We do need to develop some consistency and we won't rest on this win, we will continue to work hard."

Former Coastle Shane Knight played a dominant role in Coast's demise

CENTRAL COAST UNITED 0

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 5
(A Burgess 9', 41', S La Rocca 32', 71', A Canak 76')
at Pluim Park, Lisarow.

CENTRAL COAST UNITED: Matthew Trott, Mitchell Daley (Aaron Binskin 68), Daniel Surridge (Doug West 32, Ben Murrell 57), Sean Matthews (C), Robert Russell, Beau Busch, Gareth Jenkins, John Bennis, Peter Haynes, Marc Falzon (C), Nathan Byrn
Sub not used: RGK Ben Xerri, Luke McWaide
Coach: Jim Foley

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES: Cem Akili (Ali Akbal 74), Devrim Huseyin (Alex Canak 66), Mark D'Alessandro, Tayfun Devrimol, Greg Collins, Sam Larocca, Brad Groves, Shane Knight (C), Vuko Tomasevic, Aaron Burgess, Jimmy Aschner
Subs not used: Dejan Malenica and George Radmanovic
Coach: Gordon Brown

Referee: Jonathan Streater
Assistant Referees: Gordon Selkirk and David Moore
Fourth Official: Chris Attrill
Yellow Cards: Central Coast: Peter Haynes 42', Sean Matthews 62', Gareth Jenkins 80'
Bonnyrigg: Nil

'Hell-bent on destruction': Suns

Rockdale City Suns	Ribarovski	0
Penrith Panthers	Allied Pickfords	1

By Greg Stock

It was only another man of the match performance from star forward Jason Connolly that allowed Penrith to maintain a position in the top five on Saturday night, after a tight game that was only won after Connolly found the net from distance in the 79th minute.

His right foot strike from the edge of the area was manufactured out of literally nothing, but proved the tonic his side needed to take three points from a match in which coach Tony Rasmussen admits was governed by luck.

"We were very lucky to get the points," said Rasmussen, "Rockdale cut us to pieces right through the midfield and should have had us dead and buried by half-time.

They had the opportunities, they just couldn't shoot, but full credit to our defenders Ryan Noble, Luke Boyd and Danny Wells for scrambling so well and goal-keeper Chad Taylor for a strong effort."

Without the services of the influential Peter Bennett, the Panthers struggled for any momentum in the first-half and were exceptionally lucky not to go to the interval behind. With new Rockdale signing Ante Juric running the midfield, Tony Ju and Zenon Caravella had a field day, cutting the visitors to pieces down either flank as Juric pushed his side around the park.

But while the Rockdale engine room was firing on all cylinders their forwards remained in first gear, bombing a succession of chances that should have had the three points well in the bag by half-time.

Denis Alilovic was the main offender, and was booed heartily by his fans when replaced midway through the second-half, for throwing away a good half-a-dozen chances in and around the penalty area.

His partners Ante Moric and Peter Apolevski fared little better as the Suns forwards seemed hell-bent on their own destruction.

Leaving the game in the balance for longer than they needed too, the Suns opened the door for Connolly to strike.

After seeing a long distance shot tipped onto the crossbar by an acrobatic save from Rockdale goalkeeper Peter Trajcevski two minutes earlier, Connolly followed it up with a second strike in the 79th minute. Instead of hitting the ball in the air, he smashed his volley low and to the left of Trajcevski, who didn't pick up the drive until too late.

"That shot typifies Jason's attitude this season," Rasmussen said.

"He has trained the house down for us this season and is doing everything right on and off the park, and in situations like that, he keeps coming up with the goods.

"There was no luck about [his goal]; just him taking the opportunities as they present themselves."

Playing in an attacking midfield role this season, Connolly is in the middle of a purple patch in form.

His young teammates such as Chad Lewis and Roger Galayini are benefiting enormously from his experience and in tight games like this they are backing themselves with great results.

"If we had have bombed this one tonight after the past two losses, we would have been in a hole and our season could have been gone. Last year that may have happened, but this season we have confidence in our own ability and it shows," said Connolly.

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS 0

PENRITH PANTHERS 1
(J Connolly 79')
at Seymour Shaw Park, Miranda.

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS: Peter Trajcevski, Ante Juric, Joe Moric, Nick Ortic, Richard Plesa, Ben Deighan, Peter Apolevski, Tony Ju, Zenon Caravella, Ante Moric, Denis Alilovic (Daniel Kukucka).
Coach: Ivan Petkovic

PENRITH PANTHERS: Chad Taylor, Ryan Noble (Martin McCaffery), Daniel Wells, Allan Wawi, Jason Connolly, Luke O'Connell, Chad Lewis, Roger Galayini, Daniel McCann (Malcolm Mellak), Danny Hinton (Jason Sciberras), Luke Boyd.
Coach: Tony Rasmussen.

Referee: Peter Vrtkovski
Assistant Referees: Nicola Radic, Vic Crvkovic
Fourth Official: Sandro Petricarini
Yellow Cards: Apolevski 54', Galayini 56', Noble 78', Plesa 82', Wawi 80'

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Blacktown City; Oh So Pretty

Blacktown City Demons	Perfection	4
Bankstown City Lions	HYUNDAI	1

By Greg Stock

A little reminder to St. George and Belconnen this weekend – Blacktown is coming.

The two league leading clubs may still sit two and four points respectively above Blacktown City on the competition table, but if their 4-1 win over fellow finals contender Bankstown City is any indication, the gap is narrowing.

An almost perfect four-goal first-half from the Demons set up the 4-1 win, which takes them to third spot on the competition table, a comfortable five points above fourth.

Stats aside, this was without question one of the best Blacktown performances this season, and that includes their three high-scoring victories over the past four weeks.

Right from the opening whistle they were in a completely different class to their opponents, creative and direct in attack; they put the brakes on the Lions offence by closing down the midfield which kept Matthew Borg and Sean Babic without quality ball.

In return the visitors couldn't offer much and spent most of the first-half battling to get out of their own half.

In one of their rare forays forward they did blot the home side's perfect record with George Nohra scoring a controversial penalty to bring the score back 2-1, after Babic crashed to the turf in a bundle of arms and legs with Ben Willard.

The Demons fans let referee Con Diomis know in no uncertain terms their heart-felt belief that Babic had taken a dive.

Their first half avalanche of goals started in the 10th minute when defender Pat Gatt scored his first goal in the Premier League when he hit a drive from just inside the area.

The lead doubled when Dane Hokin put away a penalty seven minutes later following a foul on Mark Milligan.

Antonio Faria then put away a loose ball in the 39th minute to make it 3-1 after a Milligan header had rattled the woodwork. Luke Roodenberg scored number four a minute shy of the break when he drilled his header at the backpost after a pin-point corner from Kain Rastall.

"We are starting to play well as a team and our performance tonight was excellent," Blacktown coach Brian Brown said, "we never really gave Bankstown much of a chance and our defence was outstanding tonight which all helps.

"The big change has been our ability to score goals and I felt that we showed enough in attack tonight to score four and probably could have had a few more with a bit of luck."

Well held for most of the night, the Lions did try hard in the second-half, largely on the back of a cameo performance from substitute Dimitri Nicolaou who gave his side some much needed bite in their midfield.

The former Stanmore Hawks midfielder threw his slender frame about, winning a ton of ball in the centre of the park as he tried to ignite his forwards.

Sadly though, his efforts went unfurnished as the Lions forward remained well held by Damien Foxe, Willard and Gatt.

Down to earth: Adam Kwasnik is brought down

BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS 4
(P Gatt 10', D Hokin 17' pen, A Faria 39', L Roodenberg 44')
BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS 1
(G Nohra 26' pen)
at Gabbie Stadium, Seven Hills.

BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS: John Crawley, Dane Hokin (Paul Karbon), Damien Foxe, Ben Willard, Pat Gatt, Joshua Maguire, Kain Rastall (Brian Vanega), Luke Roodenburg, Tony Faria (Dominic Magill), Adam Kwasnik, Mark Milligan
Coach: Brian Brown

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS: Zlatko Josevski, Milan Bosnar, Richard Luksic, Mathew Presello, Marc Hoenselaars (Steve Liavas), Robert Gomez, Mathew Borg, George Nohra (Dimitri Nicolaou), Sasho Trajcevski (Phillip Hartshorn), Anthony Doumanis, Zeljko Babic
Coach: Andy Papoulias

Referee: Con Diomis
Assistant Referees: David Finlay, Gareth Askham
Fourth Official: Wayne Lenardon
Yellow Cards: Gatt, Rastall, Hoenselaars, Josevski

Berries brought down by resurgent A.P.I.A.

A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Continental	2
Canterbury-Marrickville	OLYMPIC	1

By Greg Stock

They say one swallow doesn't make a summer, but after five straight losses, A.P.I.A. coach Les De Celis will take his wins anyway he can.

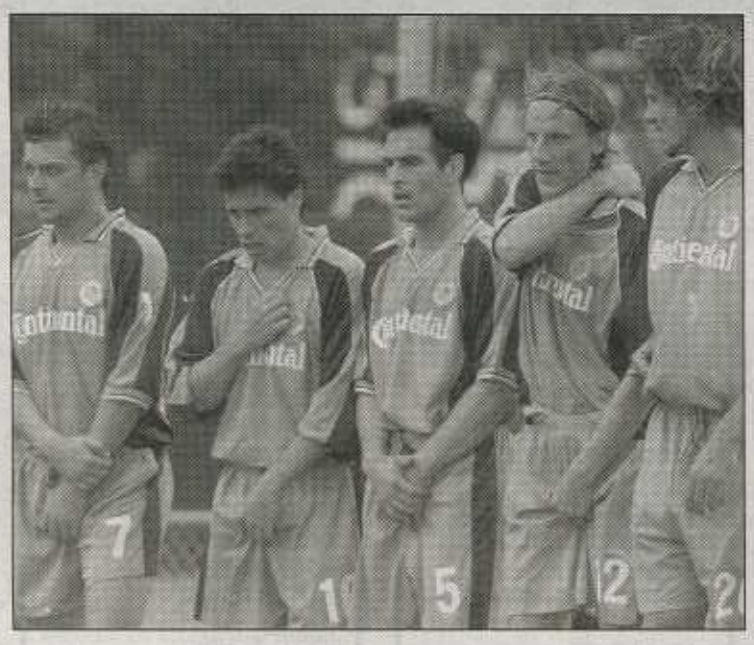
In real danger of losing touch with the top five, and having gone six games without a win, A.P.I.A. finally returned to the winners circle, their first step towards trying to resurrect a season that has failed to live up to expectations.

Having dug themselves into a hole in recent weeks, A.P.I.A. were still a long way from their best, but what they did show against Canterbury was character.

This essential ingredient that had been missing in recent performances gave them the edge in an otherwise scrappy affair.

In-form Berries marksman Steve Karavatakis gave his side a one-nil lead after 24 minutes when he put the ball into an empty net after an unlucky collision between goalkeeper Stewart Vella and defender Tony Tesoro.

Attempting to close down the rampaging David Harding, Vella, deputizing for the injured Brad Swancott, stormed forward cleaning up Tesoro in the process and allowing Harding to slip the ball through to the unmarked Karavatakis to calmly find the empty net.



A.P.I.A.: back from the brink, or just a momentary reprise?

But instead of falling apart, the real A.P.I.A. rolled up their sleeves and went to the break on level terms, courtesy of a Robbie Stanton strike direct from a corner.

Just outside the penalty box Stanton let rip with a volley from a Paul Bilokapic corner, his shot sailing through a sea of legs to beat Berries goalkeeper Bob Catlin at the near post.

Again in the second-half they pressured the Berries, the break coming when Zlatko Arambasic threw a rather speculative right boot at another corner, the shot appearing to be heading across the by-line ricochet into George Souris and snuck in at the back-post.

"It wasn't one of our best games but we did enough to get the result," A.P.I.A. captain Damon Langan said, "in the past we have been guilty of letting games like this slip, but we showed enough grit tonight to come back from one-nil down and take the game to Canterbury, who to their credit didn't let up all night."

De Celis made a few changes to his run-on side, starting Langan on the bench and had James Monie playing in the unfamiliar role of left midfield.

The Golden Boot winner from last season responding with one of his best games for the season, and probably should have found the net midway through the first-half when he missed the target completely with a shot from just outside the six yard box.

Even the out of form Arambasic put in a much improved performance, unlucky not to have scored a brace when he had a header slam into the crossbar with Catlin well-beaten early in the second-half.

A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS 2
(R Stanton 40', Z Arambasic 59')
at Lambert Park, Leichhardt.
CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE 1
(S Karavatakis 24')

A.P.I.A.-LEICHHARDT TIGERS: Stewart Vella, David Barrett, Andrew Clark, Tony Tesoro (Damon Langan), Robert Hooker (Nathan Moulds), Jon-Paul Boutros, Robert Stanton, Paul Bilokapic, James Monie, Norman Tome (Ante Alilovic), Zlatko Arambasic
Coach: Les De Celis

CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE: Bob Catlin, Sasa Ujesenovic, Ben Price (David Gardiner), George Souris, Cormack Begley, John Kyrazopoulos (Morgan Cawley), David Harding, Cormack Begley, Archie Kotsopoulos (Stuart Banks), Alan Picken, Steve Karavatakis
Coaches: Bob Catlin and Spiro Hantzis

Referee: John Bowdler.

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FIRST GRADE RESULTS & TABLES

Central Coast United 0
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 5
(A Burgess 9', 41', S La Rocca 32', 71', A Canak 76')

Blacktown City Demons 4
(P Gatt 10', D Hokin 17' pen, T Faria 39', L Roodenburg 44')
Bankstown City Lions 1
(G Nohra 26' pen)

Rockdale City Suns 0
Penrith Panthers 1
(J Connolly 79')

Belconnen Blue Devils 1
(I Prenzoski 3')
Parramatta Eagles 0

A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 2
(R Stanton 40', Z Arambasic 59')
Canterbury-Marrickville 1
(S Karavatakis 24')

Sydney Crescent Star 3
(F Marzec 49', T Ozbey 54', S Hammond 92')
St George Saints 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
St George Saints	14	10	2	2	29	14	15	32
Belconnen Blue Devils	15	9	3	3	32	19	13	30
Blacktown City Demons	15	9	1	5	33	19	14	28
Bankstown City Lions	15	7	2	6	32	29	3	23
Penrith Panthers	15	7	2	6	18	23	-5	23
Sydney Crescent Star	15	6	4	5	21	16	5	22
Rockdale City Suns	14	5	4	5	20	23	-3	19
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	15	5	2	8	22	22	0	17
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	15	5	2	8	17	23	-6	17
Parramatta Eagles	15	3	5	7	20	25	-5	14
Central Coast United	15	4	2	9	17	35	-18	14
Canterbury Marrickville	15	3	3	9	18	31	-13	12

GRADE 20 RESULTS & TABLES

Central Coast United 1
(D Cooper 86')
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1
(D Drca 79')

Blacktown City Demons 4
(B Stephan pen 30', 78' J Trifiro 44', J Bugallo 83')
Bankstown City Lions 1
(J Anevski 59')

Rockdale City Suns 0
Penrith Panthers 3
(A Anderson 3', M Noro 6', I Infanti 49')

Belconnen Blue Devils 1
(D Leet 68')
Parramatta Eagles 2
(N Chahda 17', 27')

A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 2
(R Restuccia 52', B Jenke 70')
Canterbury-Marrickville 0

Sydney Crescent Star 1
(V Kir 46')
St George Saints 1
(J Ashley 25')

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
Parramatta Eagles	15	11	2	2	34	7	27	35
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	15	11	2	2	33	13	20	35
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	15	9	4	2	34	20	14	31
Penrith Panthers	15	9	1	5	28	17	11	28
Blacktown City Demons	15	8	2	5	29	20	9	26
Belconnen Blue Devils	15	5	4	6	17	22	-5	19
Bankstown City Lions	15	5	4	6	16	29	-13	19
Canterbury Marrickville	15	5	2	8	24	32	-8	17
St George Saints	14	3	2	9	15	24	-9	11
Central Coast United	15	2	5	8	20	29	-9	11
Sydney Crescent Star	15	2	3	10	17	30	-13	9
Rockdale City Suns	14	2	3	9	16	40	-24	9

NEXT ROUND 16

FIRST GRADE

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Penrith Panthers	v	A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	Sat. 20th March	8.00pm	Cook Park (St Marys)
Belconnen Blue Devils	v	Blacktown City Demons	Sat. 20th March	7.00pm	McKellar Soccer Centre
St George Saints	v	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	Sat. 20th March	7.00pm	St George Stadium
Canterbury-Marrickville	v	Sydney Crescent Star	Sun. 21st March	5.00pm	Henson Park
Parramatta Eagles	v	Rockdale City Suns	Sun. 21st March	6.00pm	Melita Stadium
Bankstown City Lions	v	Central Coast United	Sun. 21st March	6.00pm	Jenson Park

GRADE 20

HOME TEAM		AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Penrith Panthers	v	A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	Sat. 20th March	6.00pm	Cook Park (St Marys)
Belconnen Blue Devils	v	Blacktown City Demons	Sat. 20th March	4.30pm	McKellar Soccer Centre
St George Saints	v	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	Sat. 20th March	5.00pm	St George Stadium
Canterbury-Marrickville	v	Sydney Crescent Star	Sun. 21st March	3.00pm	Henson Park
Parramatta Eagles	v	Rockdale City Suns	Sun. 21st March	4.00pm	Melita Stadium
Bankstown City Lions	v	Central Coast United	Sun. 21st March	4.00pm	Jenson Park

LEADING GOALSCORERS

As of Sunday 14th March 2004

13	Matthew Borg (BCL)
12	Ilija Prenzoski (BBD)
9	Bruno Beddoni (SG)
8	Daniel Macor (BBD), Jason Connolly (PP), Steve Karavatakis (CMO/RCS)
6	Anthony Galliozzi (BBD), Nathan Byrn (CCU), Sean Babic (BCL), Aaron Burgess (BWE)
5	Daniel Watkins (SG), Norman Tome (AL), Dominic McGill (BCD), Tony Ju (RCS), Luke Roodenburg (BCD), Sam Larocca (CMO/BWE), Filip Marzec (SCS)
4	Paul Urlovic (BCD), Ben Deighan (RCS), Denis Alilovic (RCS), Ben Delicata (PE), Peter Haynes (CCU), Roger Galayini (PP), David Arranz (BBD), Tony Faria (BCD), George Nohra (BCL)
3	James Kovas (SG), Goce Trposki (RCS), Marc Falzon (CCU), Simon Catanzaro (BCD), Ante Deur (SG), Marcus Phillips (BCD), Mark Milligan (BCD), Jimmy Aschner (BWE), Tolgay Ozbey (SCS), Zlatko Arambasic (ALT)

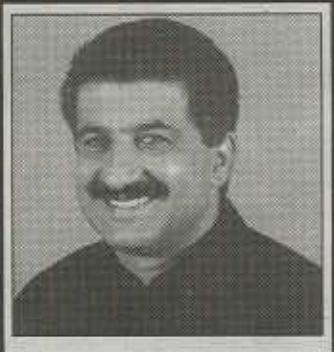
NSW PREMIER LEAGUE TIPPING COLUMN

PAUL GOODWIN
SOCCER NSW JOURNALIST
A.P.I.A.
BLACKTOWN
BONNYRIGG
SYDNEY CRESCENT
PARRAMATTA
DRAW

Points = 33

TARYN ROCKALL
NSW SAPPHIRES CAPTAIN
PENRITH PANTHERS
DRAW
ST GEORGE SAINTS
SYDNEY CRESCENT
ROCKDALE
BANKSTOWN

Points = 33



ANDY PASCHALIDIS
ELITE SPORTS TRAVEL
PENRITH PANTHERS
BELCONNEN
ST GEORGE SAINTS
SYDNEY CRESCENT
PARRAMATTA
CENTRAL COAST

Points = 37

GREG STOCK
SOCCER NSW JOURNALIST
PENRITH PANTHERS
BLACKTOWN
ST GEORGE SAINTS
SYDNEY CRESCENT
ROCKDALE
BANKSTOWN

Points = 37

'PEANUTS'
THE MONKEY
PENRITH PANTHERS
DRAW
ST GEORGE SAINTS
SYDNEY CRESCENT
ROCKDALE
BANKSTOWN

Points = 34

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ROUND 16 PREVIEW

WITH PAUL GOODWIN & GREG STOCK

Penrith Panthers vs A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers

Saturday 20th March at Cook Park
Kick-off 8.00pm First Grade / 6.00pm Grade 20

Penrith were cock-a-hoop after picking up maximum points at the expense of Rockdale at Seymour Shaw last weekend.

Jason Connolly continues to defy the pundits who thought of him as an uncompromising defender or mid-fielder. He has really come of age as a striker this summer at Cook Park.

Can Penrith placed all of their hopes on Connolly? It seen a big ask to expect one man to created a victory over last year's premiers.

A.P.I.A. have at last scored another win to break a run of five losses and their focus is likely to be fierce here.

The goal scored by experienced striker Zlatko Arambasic against Canterbury, the winner as it happens, should have given the player and the rest of his side a real confidence boost going into this game.

A.P.I.A. beat Penrith with ease the first time the sides met at Lambert Park but since then the Panthers have consolidated a top four spot while the Tigers have strugg-gled to get away from the lower rungs of the ladder. Here they have the perfect chance to complete a double and begin to move back up the table.

But nothing is sure for a Tiger team that have fallen as such lofty heights, a 2-1 victory over the Berries does little to reassure spectactors that their atrocious form of late is changing. A convincing victory over fifth-placed Penrith might go some way to silencing the doubters.

Penrith are defending well again now and they will have something worked out to contain Arambasic, Norman Tome and James Monie.

Connolly may well be required to chase back if the A.P.I.A. revival looks like continuing at any stage here.

Belconnen Blue Devils vs Blacktown City Demons

Saturday 20th March at McKellar Soccer Centre
Kick-Off 7.00pm First Grade / 5.00pm Grade 20

Belconnen and Blacktown meet again in a game that completes the cycle for the two ambitious clubs. Last time they met, at The Gabbie, the Demons got on top and won a fabulous game narrowly. This time they may well be in the kind of form to repeat that.

The Blue Devils are confident that they will have a full-strength side on hand for this one but much will depend on what happens during the week.

Oscar Zamora was carried off with a nasty looking injury in the Parramatta game and may be only a fifty-fifty chance of starting, but Mike Katz pulled up well and the main concern for Chris Tanzey will be getting his players to play at their top for this important contest.

They should need little motivation as Blacktown are always a quality side and will be coming to town on the back of some resounding wins.

The recent white-wash of Bankstown at the Gabbie saw an avalanche of goals to the Blacktown forwards, and if they can maintained the same type of pressure on the Belconnen defensive line they will be real chance to upset scond-placed Belconnen.

On the other hand Belconnen are coming off a narrow victory over tenth-ranked Parramatta. The Devils will have to play a significantly tighter game against Blacktown if they want to ensure a win.

Now that Luke Roodenburg has broken his goal scoring drought and Tony Faria is settled into the side and firing nicely on the flanks, we should see the Demons at their top.

Depending on how both sides pull up from their mid-week cup games, the two sides should be able to produce a real contest at the McKellar Soccer Centre.

Canterbury-Marrickville vs Sydney Crescent Star

Sunday 21st March at Sydney Crescent Star
Kick-Off 5.00pm First Grade / 3.00pm Grade 20

Who would have thought that Sydney Crescent Star would have been the team to upset the Saints winning run?

When he was a goalkeeper for the Turkish National Team Yasin Ozdenak was often labeled a 'magician', and now as a coach he is getting the results out of a side that on paper looks to be a class below the top sides.

Belief and enthusiasm is a powerful thing, but the question mark is, will they be able to lift again for bottom side Canterbury.

After a season full of dramas the Berries are no closer to respectability than they were before christmas, and one must wonder where there next win is coming from.

It has been five weeks since they last tasted success, despite the cameo performances of striker Steve Karavatakis who has scored eight goals in seven league matches at a time when his team has scored a total of just eleven.

If Karavatakis fires, the Berries are half a chance, if he is well held, then they are in deep trouble. It is as simple as that. A loss this week and you'd have to start listing Canterbury as favourites for the wooden spoon.

When these two teams met earlier in the season, it was Crescent Star who were far and way the better side winning two-nil.

But that was way back when Greg Woodhouse was the coach and a lot of water has passed under the bridge for Canterbury, and a number of coaches have sailed away, since then.

Expect this to be a tight, rugged affair, with the visitors starting warm favourites and Canterbury supporters watching Karavatakis like hawks.

St George Saints vs Bonnyrigg White Eagles

Saturday 20th March at St George Stadium
Kick-Off 7.00pm First Grade / 5.00pm Grade 20

The St George juggernaut hit a snag last weekend with Sydney Crescent Star sending the Premiership favourites crashing to their first defeat in ten games.

The result brought them back to the field a little, with just two points now separating them from second-placed Belconnen and four points from third-placed Blacktown City.

The Saints also face a tough away-trip in round four of the Continental Tyres Cup when they head south to meet Belconnen in what is shaping up as a tantalising clash.

By contrast Bonnyrigg face a much easier assignment against First Division club Liverpool Bossy at The Serbian Centre and look to be in much better frame of mind following their five-nil thumping of Central Coast on the weekend.

Sam Larocca and Aaron Burgess were at the top of their games, scoring two goals, though there are question marks on striker Jimmy Aschner, who has scored just twice in nine matches.

Having lifted themselves from the bottom of the table, they are now in eighth spot, and just two wins outside fifth. They must however take points from St George if they are to figure in the post-season.

Two of the more traditional rivals in the league with a rivalry going way back to 1981, it is St George that hold the advantage with 12 wins and two draws from 23 league meetings.

Earlier this season the Saints defeated the White Eagles 2-1 at The Serbian Centre with George Lagoudakis nailing a late injury time winner.

Parramatta Eagles vs Rockdale City Suns

Sunday 21st March at Melita Stadium
Kick-Off 6.00pm First Grade / 4.00pm Grade 20

The Eagles' season has really hit a brick wall, their one-nil loss to Belconnen on Saturday night seeing them slip to ninth and into the relegation zone for the first time this season.

Given the average age of the side is one of the youngest in the league their enthusiasm is being overshadowed by a lack of experience as the business end of the season sees all clubs lift a gear.

Whether or not they can bounce back to the winners circle will depend on coach Trevor Morgan, who has an uncanny ability to get his side to lift against higher-profile opponents.

His counterpart this week, Ivan Petkovic, also faces a must-win scenario after watching his sides lack of poise in front of goals cost them three points.

They had the Penrith coffin all but nailed shut by half-time last weekend, but threw it all away conceding a winner to a Jason Connolly 'special' inside the last quarter of an hour.

Expect a few changes to the Suns run-on side this weekend, Petkovic likely to recall Harry James and hand a start to Daniel Kukucka as he looks for a winning combination after going four games without a win.

Maybe a sound victory over the Eagles will help Rockdale to break their run of bad luck.

In eight league meetings between these two sides at Melita Stadium the honours are with the home side with four wins and two draws.

Overall, their advantage is much stronger with eight wins and seven draws from 17 matches, their last meeting in round five ending in a two-all draw at John Crehan Park.

Bankstown City Lions vs Central Coast United

Sunday 21st March at Central Coast United
Kick-Off 6.00pm First Grade / 4.00pm Grade 20

Bankstown are back at Jensen Park for the visit of Central Coast after the Lions were hammered by an in-form Blacktown City last weekend.

Andy Papoulias was unhappy with his defence against the Demons and has promised changes. Last week he moved Milan Bosnar back into the defence after the first Blacktown goals went in and he will also be looking for a better showing from Marc Hoenselaars and Matt Borg, both of whom the coach said disappointed him at The Gabbie.

He refused to hit the panic button, however, believing that the men he has can do the job for him.

Central Coast coach, Jim Foley, was extremely disappointed with the result of the Bonnyrigg game and the way that United played as they went down five-nil to a resurgent White Eagles team.

"The standard of play was severely lacking for this level of competition," he said.

"There was very little about that performance to speak highly about. Exceptions were our goalkeeper, Matthew Trott, who has simply had a superb season and is surely one of the emerging talents of the game. Had it not been for Trott the score-line may have been significantly worse.".

Foley was keen to highlight the performances of John Bennis, Gareth Jenkins and first grade debutante Robert Russell, who was included in the squad due to several key players absent and gave a great account of himself. Unfortunately the game was one club captain Sean Matthews would rather forget.

"He made some uncharacteristically bad mistakes... at crucial moments of the game," Foley said.

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FROM THE SIDELINES

WITH GREG STOCK

Phil's kid

As mentioned in last weeks FTS, Manly coach Phil Moss is a proud new father with wife Kim presenting him with a baby girl, Tiarna Jade Moss. Born at 5:45 last Monday morning, and weighing 7' 8", she is in fine spirits and already giving dad and brother Nathan a hard time. Congratulations to both Phil and Kim on the new addition to their family.

Veteran Jason in a class of his own

Has Penrith forward Jason Connolly found the secret of eternal youth? He won't like FTS discussing this, but the 33-year old may be approaching the 'veteran' class, though it hasn't slowed him for a moment. While readily admitting he has always been a 'less than capable trainer' in the past, this year he has got himself super-fit and is arguably the best attacking midfielder in the league. His only blemish being a send-off against Belconnen in the first round of the season, else he would be a raging favourite for this years Gold Medal.

Coup continues at the Dragons

Fraser Park coach Ian Gillan has pulled off yet another recruiting coup, agreeing to terms with Wollongong City striker Tanju Balabanel. The Golden Boot winner of last years Super League when playing with Crescent Star is expected to play his first match for his new side on Wednesday night in the Round Four Continental Cup match against Rockdale City Suns.

"He is a quality striker and we are very happy to have him on board," Gillan said.

Unofficially, the Dragons boss has also been linked with a move to sign former Sydney United, Fairfield Bulls and Canterbury-Marrickville defender Tom Maric.

Swan-dive

Our commiseration's to A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt goalkeeper Brad Swancott. 'Swany' tore his posterior cruciate ligament in his right knee in a collision with teammate Robbie Stanton in the match against St George two weeks ago.

The diagnosis has him in a leg cast for a month and out of football for anything up to six weeks. Former A.I.S. goalkeeper Stewart Vella is deputizing until what is looking to be the end of the season.

PREMIER LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK*

GOALKEEPER:

Anthony Giannasca (Belconnen) outstanding series of reflex saves to deny a rampant Parramatta Eagles at stage of the game when they threatened to punish the Blue Devils.

DEFENDERS:

Damien Foxe (Blacktown City) – Despite nursing an injured back he marshaled the Demons back four with a ruthlessness that kept their chances to an absolute minimum.

Angelo Petratos (Sydney Crescent Star) steady at the back against his former club, the man who loves to come forward stayed back to show the way to a solid win for his much improved side.

Ante Juric (Rockdale City Suns) – An impressive debut for the Suns new sweeper who drove his side from the back

Ryan Noble (Penrith Panthers) – Deputizing for Malcolm Meilak in a positional switch he saved his side on numerous occasion in the first half against Rockdale, coming up with the big tackles when it mattered.

MIDFIELDERS:

Shane Knight (Bonnyrigg White Eagles) all over the park in defence and attack with a real captain's game to lead his side from the front.

Sam Larocca (Bonnyrigg White Eagles) in full control of the centre of the park and capped a fine performance with two well taken goals.

Michael Katz (Belconnen Blue Devils) made his return to the side after an injury enforced lay off and showed he was still very much an integral part of this side.

Jason Connolly (Penrith Panthers) – Another cameo performance from the 34-year old who scored the winner and almost single handedly won the game for his team.

STRIKERS

Tolgay Ozbey (Sydney Crescent Star) was at his brilliant best, beating the St George defence time and again on the flanks and out pacing the defenders through the middle for good measure, scoring one more goal to add to his growing tally.

Zlatko Arambasic (A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt) – the big fella is back, throwing himself around with gay abandon and finding his side a winner in a tight contest.

COACH

Brian Brown (Blacktown City) - Has the Demons firing on all cylinders with three big wins from their last four starts

**From this week on FTS is going to be suggesting a 'super' team made up of the best Premier League players for that week. Feel feel to contact us at media@soccernsw.com.au and suggest your own super teams or players*

DRAGONS FACE THEIR NEMESIS

A gritty one-nil win against arch-rivals Dulwich Hill at Henson Park saw Fraser Park kick round two of the Winter Super League off.

Missing influential midfielder Glenn Sprod and striker Liam Austin, the Dragons had to dig deep for the win, their only goal coming in the 59th minute from reborn striker Spiro Kladis, who put away a deft cut-back from Zia Younan following a mazy run from Scott Dixon.

Despite their rusty performance, they did look the better of the two sides, sweeper Michael Kladis and midfielder Martin Bourke the picks for Fraser Park.

At Nineveh Field, Sydney University piled on the pressure in a scorching first-half against Fairfield Bulls, but conceded a well-taken strike to the home side to go to the break one-nil behind.

In a much more even second-half the students did get an equaliser via Rob Smithies who was on the end of a great run from Adam Snyder, but probably should have taken a better share of the points if not for the performance of Bull's goalkeeper Claudio Fernandez.

Fernandez pulled off two acrobatic saves in the first-half, tipping a Peter Satos header over the bar and throwing himself onto the foot of Smithies on the point of the six-yard-box as he attempted to slot home a pass from Snyder.

Manly continued their winning way, disposing of a physical Hurstville ZSC side at Cromer Park. With new signing Joe Vrkic strengthening the defence, Hurstville gave the Dolphins little in the way of opportunities and it was left to Brent Fisher to put away the only chance of the second-half.

Racing onto a long clearance from goalkeeper Paul Henderson, Fisher - who had earlier missed a one-on-one opportunity with Robert Mustapic - would not be denied by the talented keeper, rounding him and putting the ball into an empty net.

MSC Liverpool coach Paul Carter was fuming with his sides performance, or lack of it, when beaten by a fired up Stanmore Hawks at Hammondville Oval. Carter gave his side a tongue lashing at the end of the match for what he considered to be a 'general lack of commitment' in their performance.

He watched helplessly as the Hawks new midfielder Scott Baillie took the game by the scruff of the neck. Scoring one himself from a breakaway in the 37th minute, he set up Neil Phillipou for number two with a great diagonal ball and was then bundled over in the 74th minute by Stuart Southall to set up a penalty, converted by Sam Dawd.

Sweeper George Zabetakis kept the Liverpool forwards well held while Sam Awad showed he is getting back to his best with a strong outing in the midfield. Eric Williams and Southall the only two players to make much of an impact for the home side.

Sutherland got their season off on a winning note putting Ryde City to the sword with a two-nil win at Seymour Shaw Park. Unveiling a host of new signings, Sharks coach Vic Ellul handed debuts to Wollongong Wolves trio Dean Heffernan, Nathan Abel and Stewart Van Bentum and they proved way too strong for the youthful Gunners.

Heffernan showed his class with two goals, one from a brilliant shot just outside the area, and a second from a one-on-one, those they should have had three after Ryde City goalkeeper Petrovski saved a penalty. At the other end, Adam Kurtz kept a clean sheet denying everything that Ryde could muster.

In the other games, Hajduk Wanderers United stormed to a two-nil lead after twelve minutes to defeat Hurstville City Minotaurs at the Rockdale Ilinden Sports Centre with Macarthur Rams shock 3-1 losers to Northern Tigers at Lynwood Park.

RESULTS

WINTER SUPER LEAGUE: ROUND 2:

FIRST GRADE: Macarthur Rams 1 (R Harrison 81m) Northern Tigers 3 (J Mesiti 22m A Oppedisano 42m M Hunter 82m), Dulwich Hill 0 Fraser Park Dragons 1 (S Kladis 59m), Fairfield Bulls 1 (L Gunn 16m) Sydney University 1 (T Lara 68m), Sutherland Shire Sharks 2 (D Heffernan 20/65m) Ryde City 0, Manly Warringah Dolphins 1 (B Fisher 75m) Hurstville ZSC 0, MSC Liverpool 0 Stanmore Hawks 3 (S Baillie 37m N Philippou 41m S Dawd 74m), Hurstville City Minotaurs 0 Hajduk Wanderers United 2 (T Gledhill 2m N Varess 12m).

GRADE 20: Macarthur Rams 2 Northern Tigers 0, Dulwich Hill 0 Fraser Park Dragons 1, Fairfield Bulls 2 Sydney University 1, Sutherland Shire Sharks 0 Ryde City 0, Manly Warringah Dolphins 3 Hurstville ZSC 2, MSC Liverpool 1 Stanmore Hawks 2, Hurstville City Minotaurs 1 Hajduk Wanderers United 4.

RESCHEDULED GAME: ROUND 1:

GRADE 20: Hajduk Wanderers United 5 Hurstville ZSC 2.

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE: ROUND 2:

GRADE 13: Fraser Park - Canterbury 4 Fairfield Bulls 0, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0 Parramatta Star 1, St George 2 Northern Tigers 1, Penrith Nepean United 1 Hills United 0, Manly Warringah Dolphins 3 Schofield Scorpions 0, Southern Branch 2 Granville Rage 1.

GRADE 14: Fraser Park - Canterbury 1 Fairfield Bulls 0, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 Parramatta Star 1, St George 6 Northern Tigers 0, Penrith Nepean United 0 Hills United 0, Manly Warringah Dolphins 0 Schofield Scorpions 1, Southern Branch 2 Granville Rage 1.

GRADE 15: Fraser Park - Canterbury 3 Fairfield Bulls 2, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 3 Parramatta Star 0, St George 0 Northern Tigers 2, Penrith Nepean United 4 Hills United 1, Manly Warringah Dolphins 0 Schofield Scorpions 4, Southern Branch 3 Granville Rage 2.

GRADE 16: Fraser Park - Canterbury 1 Fairfield Bulls 3, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 3 Parramatta Star 0, St George 0 Northern Tigers 0, Penrith Nepean United 2 Hills United 3, Manly Warringah Dolphins 4 Schofield Scorpions 0, Southern Branch 0 Granville Rage 3.

GRADE 18: Fraser Park - Canterbury 1 Fairfield Bulls 4, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 Parramatta Star 4, St George 1 Northern Tigers 0, Penrith Nepean United 1 Hills United 0, Manly Warringah Dolphins 2 Schofield Scorpions 2, Southern Branch 2 Granville Rage 0.

DIVISION ONE YOUTH LEAGUE: ROUND 2:

GRADE 13: Bathurst 75 Western 2 Sydney Uni/Eastern Lions 1, Dulwich Hill 0 Rockdale City Suns 0, Hurstville City Minotaurs 4 Ryde City 0, Camden Tigers 8 Stanmore Hawks 0, Wollongong United 1 Belmore Hercules 0.

GRADE 14: Bathurst 75 Western 3 Sydney Uni/Eastern Lions 1, Dulwich Hill 1 Rockdale City Suns 1, Hurstville City Minotaurs 0 Ryde City 0, Camden Tigers 3 Stanmore Hawks 0, Wollongong United 0 Belmore Hercules 2.

GRADE 15: Bathurst 75 Western 0 Sydney Uni/Eastern Lions 3, Dulwich Hill 1 Rockdale City Suns 1, Hurstville City Minotaurs 0 Ryde City 0, Camden Tigers 5 Stanmore Hawks 1, Wollongong United 7 Belmore Hercules 0.

GRADE 16: Bathurst 75 Western 5 Sydney Uni/Eastern Lions 1, Dulwich Hill 2 Rockdale City Suns 1, Hurstville City Minotaurs 4 Ryde City 1, Camden Tigers 3 Stanmore Hawks 0, Wollongong United 1 Belmore Hercules 1.

GRADE 18: Bathurst 75 Western 3 Sydney Uni/Eastern Lions 2, Dulwich Hill 3 Rockdale City Suns 1, Hurstville City Minotaurs 0 Ryde City 2, Camden Tigers 0 Stanmore Hawks 2, Wollongong United 0 Belmore Hercules 5.

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION ONE: ROUND 2:

FIRST GRADE: Nepean Association 3 (G Orcajo 25m Penalty/85m S Mort 70m) Schofields Scorpions 0, Fairfield City Lions 2 (B Akin 77/90m) Bathurst 75 2 (R Guihot 53m M Rooke 86m), White City 2 (J Zrinjanin 65m S Milovanovic 90m) Belmore Hercules 0, Liverpool Bossy 2 (N Codmani 41m A Adamo 75m) Camden Tigers 0, Mt Pritchard 0 Hills United 2 (D Nash 10m T Bardsley 66m), The Wanderers 5 (M Hurtado Pachec 6m K Ruiz Orihuela 35m J Hurtado Pachec 51m M Slavicek 82m M Sutton 90m) Mt Druitt Town Rangers 0, Wollongong United 3 (R Todorovski 17/35m M Bideau 14m) Western Rage 3 (D Borg 5m D Coletta 67m G Wakim 74m).

GRADE 20: Nepean Association 2 Schofields Scorpions 1, Fairfield City Lions 0 Bathurst 75 1, White City 3 Belmore Hercules 3, Liverpool Bossy 1 Camden Tigers 4, Mt Pritchard 2 Hills United 0, The Wanderers 2 Mt Druitt Town Rangers 3, Wollongong United 0 Western Rage 5.

PREMIER YOUTH LEAGUE: RESCHEDULED GAME: ROUND 5:

GRADE 18: Wollongong Wolves 1 Blacktown City Demons 0.

PREMIER YOUTH LEAGUE: ROUND 2:

GRADE 13: Marconi Stallions 4 Macarthur Rams 1, Newcastle United 1 Central Coast United 0, Sydney United 1 Wollongong Wolves 1, Parramatta Eagles 3 Bankstown City Cubs 3, Sydney Olympic 0 Hajduk Wanderers United 1, Gladesville Spirit SC Inc 5 Sutherland Shire 2, A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 1 Blacktown City Demons 1.

GRADE 14: Marconi Stallions 9 Macarthur Rams 0, Newcastle United 4 Central Coast United 2, Sydney United 1 Wollongong Wolves 2, Parramatta Eagles 2 Bankstown City Cubs 0, Sydney Olympic 1 Hajduk Wanderers United 1, Gladesville Spirit SC Inc 1 Sutherland Shire 0, A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 0 Blacktown City Demons 3.

GRADE 15: Marconi Stallions 5 Macarthur Rams 0, Newcastle United 6 Central Coast United 0, Sydney United 1 Wollongong Wolves 1, Parramatta Eagles 1 Bankstown City Cubs 0, Sydney Olympic 4 Hajduk Wanderers United 0, Gladesville Spirit SC Inc 1 Sutherland Shire 1, A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 0 Blacktown City Demons 1.

GRADE 16: Marconi Stallions 2 Macarthur Rams 2, Newcastle United 2 Central Coast United 0, Sydney United 1 Wollongong Wolves 0, Parramatta Eagles 2 Bankstown City Cubs 1, Sydney Olympic 3 Hajduk Wanderers United 1, Gladesville Spirit SC Inc 2 Sutherland Shire 1, A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 1 Blacktown City Demons 0.

GRADE 18: Marconi Stallions 2 Macarthur Rams 0, Newcastle United 2 Central Coast United 4, Sydney United 2 Wollongong Wolves 2, Parramatta Eagles 3 Bankstown City Cubs 1, Sydney Olympic 2 Hajduk Wanderers United 1 Gladesville Spirit SC Inc 1 Sutherland Shire 3, A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 0 Blacktown City Demons 3.

S.S.I. GIRLS YOUTH LEAGUE: ROUND 2:

GRADE 12: Sutherland Association 4 Blacktown Districts 0, North West Sydney Koalas 2 St George Association 1, Wollongong Wolves 2 UNSW 3, Marconi 2 Northern Tigers 2, Nepean Association 2 Macarthur Rams 1, Manly Warringah Dolphins 2 Southern Branch 0.

GRADE 14: Sutherland Association 3 Blacktown Districts 0, North West Sydney Koalas 2 St George Association 3, Wollongong Wolves 0 UNSW 0, Marconi 2 Northern Tigers 1, Nepean Association 0 Macarthur Rams 1, Manly Warringah Dolphins 3 Southern Branch 0.

GRADE 16: Sutherland Association 3 Blacktown Districts 1, North West Sydney Koalas 4 St George Association 1, Wollongong Wolves 2 UNSW 1, Marconi 6 Northern Tigers 0, Nepean Association 3 Macarthur Rams 4, Manly Warringah Dolphins 2 Southern Branch 3

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PREMIER LEAGUE LEADERS SQUARE OFF IN CUP GRUDGE MATCH

MENDEZ

A dress rehearsal for this year's NSW Premier league Grand Final may very well take place this Wednesday night when league leaders, the St George Saints, travel down the Hume to face second placed Belconnen Blue Devils at the McKellar Soccer Centre in round four of the 2004 Continental Tyres Cup.

As the seedings for this years competition were based on the 2002/03 final league standings whereby the Blue Devils finished fourth and the Saints ninth it was pure luck and coincidence that have brought the two form teams of the NSW Premier League together at such an early stage.

Although the Saints have a two-point buffer and a game in hand over their ACT-based opponents, the punters out there are putting them in the underdog category due to their shock three-nil defeat at the hands of Sydney Crescent Star on top of a tiring midweek road trip to the nation's capital. Apart from survival in the cup at stake, so is the psychological advantage going into the business end of the season. If you fancy a drive Wednesday afternoon, make the trip to McKellar for this blockbuster fixture.

In the other NSW Premier League match up, local rivals the Parramatta Eagles host Sydney Crescent Star at Melita stadium. When they met earlier this year the teams shared the points at Lidcombe Oval. With these two teams meeting again in three weeks time, it will be a perfect opportunity for either to claim bragging rights over the other.

The in-form Blacktown City Demons will host a confident Hadjuk Wanderers at the Gabbie Stadium. The Demons have been timing their run perfectly towards the end of the league and with the addition of Adam Kwasnik, Mark Milligan and Tony Faria to the squad have greatly reinforced an already dominant collection of players. Hadjuk have started off their Winter Super League season with a win and a draw, but the most notable statistic from their two games is that former Silver Medal Winner Tim Gledhill has scored three of the club's four goals. Expect a high scoring affair, no matter what.

The resurgent Bonnyrigg White Eagles, fresh from their five-nil demolition of Central Coast United, face the sole Division One survivor, Liverpool Bossy at the Serbian Centre. Since his appointment early this year, coach Gordon Brown has instilled some much needed discipline and structure to the White Eagles side. They are beginnig to show glimpses of their form-of-old that had them as major title contenders last season. Liverpool Bossy will need to call upon all the experience and stamina of their well-assembled roster to steal this one from their more fancied opposition.

GIANNASCA

The remainder of the fixtures pit NSW Premier league clubs against Winter Super League clubs with the Penrith Panthers hosting the Fairfield Bulls, Fraser Park Dragons taking on the Rockdale City Suns, Sydney University lining up against with Canterbury Marrickville Olympic and A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers challenging the Sutherland Sharks.

ROUND 4 FIXTURES

Date	Home Team	Away Team	Venue	Time
17-03-04	Blacktown City Demons	Hajduk Wanderers United	Gabbie Stadium	19:30
17-03-04	Penrith Panthers	Fairfield Bulls	Cook Park (St Marys)	19:30
17-03-04	Parramatta Eagles	Sydney Crescent Star	Melita Stadium	19:30
17-03-04	Belconnen Blue Devils	St George Saints	McKellar SC	20:00
17-03-04	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	Liverpool Bossy	Serbian Centre	19:30
17-03-04	Fraser Park Dragons	Rockdale City Suns	Fraser Park	19:30
17-03-04	Sydney University	Canterbury Marrickville	Lambert Park	18:30
17-03-04	A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	Sutherland Sharks	Lambert Park	20:30

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SOCCER NSW

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Sapphires, NSW Netball, Della Bosca announce joint road safety initiative

Soccer NSW, in concert with the Special Minister for State, John Della Bosca and NSW Netball, is participating in a State Government initiative to help combat road deaths and injuries, it was announced yesterday.

Under the NSW Motor Accidents Authority's (MAA) youth road safety banner, Arrive Alive, the NSW Women's Soccer team, the Sapphires, has formed a partnership with the Sydney TAB Swifts and the Hunter Jaegers.

Mr Della Bosca unveiled the plan on Monday at a joint press conference with Soccer NSW and NSW Netball.

"The Arrive alive partnership with the State women's soccer and netball teams is the latest intiative in our efforts to reduce fatalities and injuries among young drivers," he said.

"We are encouraging young women to be responsible road users by linking key safety messages to popular women's sport and using high profile netball and soccer athletes as road safety advocates."

Yesterday's announcement is set to be one of the largest sponsorship deals supporting women's soccer in NSW, with the Arrive alive partnership worth more than $100,000 for the code.

The MAA has had a history of sponsoring sporting actitivties involving young people as a means of providing a forum for young people to receive the message of road safety while doing activities they enjoy.

But this latest sponsorship deal marks a shift in focus from young men - due to their over-involvement in road crashes - to trying to deal with issues specific to young female motorists.

Although crash rates for young women are lower this is not the case for all measures of road safety.

Young women in NSW have a higher rate of injury related crashes for age groups up to 25 years - in most cases their injuries are sustained as passengers.

The MAA hopes to use the sponsorship of Soccer NSW to address this imbalance and communicate road safety messages relevant to young female drivers.

NSW Sapphires with Special Minister of State Government, John Della Bosca, and members of NSW Netball teams the Sydney Swifts and the Hunter Jaegars

Along with the NSW Sapphires, MAA will be sponsoring the NSW Women's State and Super League Competitions.

Of prime importance in the sponsorship deal is the benefit of using elite players as role models to deliver road safety mesages to young female socer players in year ten, eleven and twelve in schools throughout NSW, the MAA explained in a document released to coincide with the sponsorship announcement.

Part of the sponsosrhsip deals includes getting players to discuss current road safety issues with their young audiences, including topics such as what they see are the risks associated with driving; how to communicate with a driver when they don't feel safe in a car; and how to deal with peer pressure and to get to their destination safely.

The players will also direct them to the MAA's youth website - www.Arrivealive.com.au - where a range of relevant information on a variety of areas affecting young drivers can be found.

Regular updates on visits to NSW schools by the players will be displayed on the Arrive alive website.

SOCCER NSW

Events Coordinator

An exciting opportunity is available for a highly skilled, motivated and well organised person to work for Soccer NSW, based at Valentine Sports Park, Glenwood NSW.

The successful applicant will be responsible for the coordination of events and sporting tournaments to include but not limited to the National Talent Identification Championships and Friendship Games as well as tours for representative teams and special purpose groups.

This full time position involves the following duties and responsibilities;

- Assist in researching and identifying new prospects for events and sporting tournaments,
- Administration of events and tournaments,
- Be in attendance at all events and tournaments,
- Maintain existing and assist in developing new client relationships,
- Liaising with the various departments of Soccer NSW, and
- Co-ordinating external suppliers, contractors and management of internal resources associated with the position.

Essential Criteria;

- Initiative, autonomy and creativity.
- Excellent organisational and project management skills.
- Excellent written and verbal communication.
- Excellent computer skills.
- Strong attention to detail.
- Soccer and/or sports interests preferred, and
- Relevant tertiary qualifications and previous professional experience.

If you believe you match the requirements of this role please address the essential criteria and provide evidence of previous event management experience in your resume. Recent references are also required.

This is a Child Related Position and will be subject to a Working With Children Check.
Prohibited Persons need not apply.

Remuneration will be commensurate with qualifications and experience. For further information contact Linda Christie – Human Resources, on (02) 8814 4400 or email linda@soccernsw.com.au

Applications Close March 18 2004.
Forward your resume marked Private & Confidential to:

Linda Christie - Human Resources
PO BOX 6146, Baulkham Hills BC 2153
linda@soccernsw.com.au
P 02 8814 4400 F 02 9629 3770

Road Safety Messages

Arrive alive - If you drink, don't drive.

- Alcohol affects all drivers. It:
  - o reduces the ability to judge speed and distance
  - o impairs reactions and decision-making
  - o increases confidence and aggression.
- Young drivers who drink and drive are the most 'at-risk' group for serious and fatal crashes.
- Pick a designated driver for your night out: choose someone who won't drink at all.

Arrive alive - Chill - Speed Kills

- Speeding is travelling faster than the posted speed limit. It can also mean driving too fast for the road or weather conditions.
- Slow down in the rain, when visibility is poor and be very careful at night.
- Speeding is the most common cause of fatal road accidents for young drivers.
- Slowing down just a little can reduce accidents and injuries a lot.

Arrive alive - Are you a drowsy driver?

- Don't drive if you're feeling tired, or feel like you can't concentrate.
- Before a long trip, get a good night's sleep. Share the driving and take regular breaks.
- Check medicine labels to see if they affect driving or concentration.
- Fatigue impairs judgement and decreases your ability to judge your own tiredness.
- Combining study and work, night shifts, or going out late can increase fatigue.

Arrive alive - belt up

- Wait until everyone in the car has their seatbelt fastened before driving.
- Carry only as many passengers as there are seatbelts.
- Without a seatbelt you could be seriously injured or killed, even at low speeds.
- Make sure children use an approved child restraint.

Arrive alive - Don't overload your car with friends.

- Don't fill your car with passengers. Friends can be very distracting.
- If you are distracted or stressed by passengers, you may overreact or panic in an emergency.
- If passengers distract you, pull over and ask your friends to let you concentrate.
- Make sure passengers wear seatbelts.

Arrive alive - Don't be a staggering statistic

- Be careful leaving a place where you've been drinking. Stay on the footpath and cross at the lights or crossing.
- Watch out for your mates who have been drinking and make sure they are safe to get home.
- After a party, call a taxi, stay overnight or walk home safely with a sober friend.
- Young adults aged 20 - 34 account for more pedestrian casualties than any other age group.
- Slow down when driving at dusk and in the dark, and watch for pedestrians around busy areas and pubs.

Arrive alive - Hang up and drive

- Using a mobile phone while driving is dangerous and illegal.
- Distracted drivers are more likely to run into the car in front, or lose control and run off the road.
- Slow down when driving at dusk and in the dark, and watch out for pedestrians.

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ITALIAN SERIE A

ITALIAN AFFAIR

By Joe Russo

It is one in and one out for the Italian clubs in the Champions League as last year's runners up Juventus were humiliated by Deportivo La Coruna but defending champions AC Milan overcame some initial difficulty to eliminate Sparta Prague.

It was Juventus's elimination that really shocked most supporters in Italy. Man Utd's elimination at the hands of Porto had a similar reaction in England.

The last Spanish side to beat Juventus in Turin in a European Cup match was Real Madrid way back in 1962. However, Deportivo, thanks to a goal from Walter Pandiani and a lot of help from veteran Juventus defenders Ciro Ferrara and Paolo Montero who should have done a lot better, caused an enormous upset.

Even though Juventus were without David Trezeguet and Alex Del Piero, who came off early, it is still no excuse for one of Europe's great clubs to lose at home.

Let's not forget that this Deportivo side lost 8-3 to Monaco earlier in the tournament and how they can recover to beat Juventus is really nothing short of a miracle.

AC Milan had a few heart-stopping moments at the San Siro in Milan after Sparta Prague equalised to be 1-1 in the second half and had the score remained at that, then AC Milan would have lost on the away-goals rule.

Andrey Shevchenko with two goals and Gennaro Gattuso with the other, added the three more goals that brought AC Milan's tally to four for the game.

★ ★ ★ ★

Following Juve's exit from the Champions League there has been a fair bit of post match news reported in the Italian media.

Del Piero's injury has been a major talking point. His calf injury will see him miss at least a month of football. He has had these types of injuries before but it is terribly frustrating for him to have to go through it all again but at least he will be back and won't miss Euro 2004.

Meanwhile General Manager, Luciano Moggi, has defended his Juventus team and their performance. He simply said, "you cannot win them all."

However, Moggi pointed out that up until December Juventus seemed unbeatable but then a few injuries severely impacted on his team.

He also denied that coach Marcello Lippi was at any risk of losing his job. In fact he described Juve's most successful coach in the last 20 years as "untouchable."

Juventus's exit will also cost the club financially. They will lose all the extra television revenue from the next rounds of the Champions League plus all the extra and lucrative home gates.

One cannot help wondering about the fallout a few months ago between Lippi and star midfielder, Edgar Davids, which has cost the club a lot more than they probably expected.

Davids parted company with the club in January after frustratingly sitting on the bench for far longer than he really wanted to.

★ ★ ★ ★

In the UEFA Cup the news for Italy was even worse — one draw and one loss. Roma lost away to Villareal 2-0, despite the home side's request to UEFA to postpone the game after the tragic events in Madrid, and Inter could only manage a scoreless draw away to Benfica.

Roma, without Totti, Delvecchio, Chivu, Dacourt and Candela, were never really in the game. Villareal, playing in the most difficult of circumstances imaginable, were brave enough to do away with the hapless Roma.

The only good news for Roma was that former pin-up boy, Vincenzo Montella, played a full game. However, in the return leg at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, Roma will have to score three goals to get through.

Inter have to thank their goalkeeper Francesco Toldo for keeping a clean sheet and in the end a scoreless draw is not too bad going into the return leg at home in Milan.

Inter were extremely conservative, with a five man midfield, and were clearly playing for the draw. Toldo's magnificent goalkeeping kept the visitors in the tie.

★ ★ ★ ★

ASW readers can tune into 98.5 FM on Sunday nights at 10.00pm for all the latest soccer news locally and abroad with myself, Joseph Carlucci, Mark Stavroulakis, Robert Scarselletta and Stuart Jones.

JUVENTUS 1
MILAN 3

Dutch international Clarence Seedorf scored twice as AC Milan tightened their grip at the top of Serie A with a convincing 3-1 win at champions Juventus.

Seedorf created Milan's opener in the 25th minute, providing a perfect cross for Andriy Shevchenko who thundered a header past Juve keeper Gianluigi Buffon.

The Dutchman then made it 2-0 in the 63rd minute with a deflected shot from 20 metres out before striking again as he finished off a counter-attack with a blistering left-foot shot after Cafu had found him unmarked on the edge of the area.

Juventus pulled a goal back nine minutes from the end through defender Ciro Ferrara.

Milan have a seven-point lead over second-placed Roma.

REGGINA 0
ROMA 0

Second-placed Roma continue to lose ground in their pursuit of Milan after being held 0-0 at Reggina.

Fabio Capello's men desperately needed all three points but failed to find the net.

They did create plenty of chances, but substitute Vincenzo Montella missed two of the best openings late in the game.

LAZIO 2
UDINESE 2

Lazio maintained fourth spot but will be less than pleased after squandering a two-goal advantage at home to Udinese to draw 2-2.

The Biancoceleste stormed into a commanding early lead thanks to goals from Roberto Muzzi and Simone Inzaghi only for former Lazio midfielder Lucas Castroman to reduce the deficit and a last-minute header from Vincenzo Iaquinta to hand the visitors a point from a 2-2 draw.

INTER MILAN 0
CHIEVO 0

Uninspiring Inter Milan halted a depressing losing streak but a goalless draw with Chievo at the San Siro once again highlighted their many inadequacies.

SERIE B

Albinoleffe 0 Genoa 0, Fiorentina 2 Palermo 1, Avellino 2 Salernitana 1, Bari 3 Livorno 2, Cagliari 0 Torino 0, Catania 1 Ternana 1, Como 0 Vicenza 1, Napoli 1 Treviso 0, Pescara 0 Atalanta 0, Piacenza 1 Messina 0, Venezia 1 Ascoli 0, Verona 0 Triestina 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palermo	32	14	12	6	45	29	54
Atalanta	32	13	15	4	40	26	54
Piacenza	31	14	10	7	33	25	52
Cagliari	32	13	12	7	53	34	51
Livorno	32	12	14	6	42	30	50
Ternana	32	13	11	8	44	35	50
Messina	32	12	13	7	43	33	49
Torino	32	12	11	9	43	34	47
Triestina	32	11	13	8	41	39	46
Fiorentina	32	10	14	8	36	39	44
Catania	32	11	10	11	37	34	43
Vicenza	32	10	13	9	35	32	43
Napoli	32	7	18	7	23	31	39
Albinoleffe	32	10	9	13	30	40	39
Verona	32	9	11	12	39	42	38
Salernitana	31	10	8	13	27	33	38
Treviso	32	8	13	11	29	32	37
Ascoli	32	8	12	12	34	38	36
Venezia	32	8	12	12	26	33	36
Pescara	32	8	11	13	24	38	35
Bari	32	8	10	14	34	43	34
Genoa	32	7	13	12	28	38	34
Como	32	7	10	15	25	38	31
Avellino	32	4	13	15	31	46	25

Lecce's Ernesto Chevanton (centre) is tackled by Empoli's Emilson Cribari (left) and Paolo Zanetti.

Inter, who entered the match on a miserable run of four straight Serie A defeats, were out of luck and lacking in belief as they failed to break down their mid-table opponents who came for, and comfortably left with, a point.

PARMA 2
BRESCIA 2

Evergreen striker Roberto Baggio struck his 200th Serie A goal as Brescia twice came from behind to salvage a 2-2 draw at Parma.

Baggio, who is now 37 years old and likely to retire at the end of the season, fired home with 17 minutes remaining to frustrate the home side who would have climbed to fourth place with a win.

Benito Carbone put Parma ahead but Brescia were level when Baggio's free-kick was flicked on by Caracciolo and Luigi Di Biagio ran in to power a header past Sebastien Frey.

Parma went back in front on the hour when Marco Marchionni netted but then Baggio reached his special personal milestone to save a point.

PERUGIA 1
MODENA 1

Jose Ze Maria's second-half penalty salvaged a point for relegation-threatened Perugia in a stormy 1-1 draw against Modena which saw both sides finish with 10 men.

Serse Cosmi's side continue their unlikely push for Serie A safety, taking their tally to eight points in four games but the match ended in controversy with Modena's Mauro Mayer and Perugia's Dario Hubner both receiving their marching orders deep into injury time.

Fabio Vignaroli put Modena ahead on 18 minutes but Ze Maria's spot kick levelled things after the break.

SIENA 3
ANCONA 2

Siena brought their poor run of form to an end with a 3-2 victory over bottom club Ancona.

The home side ended their recent goal drought in emphatic fashion with three strikes in the first half, two of which came right on the stroke of half-time.

Ancona, who had scored just nine Serie A goals before facing Siena, battled valiantly and reduced the arrears to 3-2 with a second-half goal from Milan Rapaic.

But that was as good as it got for the visitors, who are still searching for their first win of the season.

SAMPDORIA 3
BOLOGNA 2

Sampdoria kept alive their hopes of qualifying for the UEFA Cup with a thrilling 3-2 win over Bologna at the Luigi Ferraris stadium.

An action-packed encounter sparked into life nine minutes in when Sampdoria won a penalty and Sergio Volpi opened the scoring from the spot.

The lead lasted just 60 seconds, however, as veteran Giuseppe Signori levelled with a powerful low shot.

Samp restored their lead on 28 minutes through Aimo Diana and they extended the gap to two goals with their first attack of the second period with Cipriani netting on 50 minutes.

The visitors pulled a goal back with 21 minutes remaining through Carlo Nervo.

EMPOLI 0
LEECE 0

Empoli failed to ease their relegation worries as they were held to a 0-0 draw by Lecce

Attilio Perotti's team had taken five points in their previous three games and against Lecce, perennial strugglers in Serie A, they must have liked their chances.

But Lecce proved to be too tough a nut to crack on this occasion and Empoli, as a result, are still third from bottom.

Sampdoria's Morris Carrozzieri (left) gets his foot to the ball ahead of Bologna's Igli Tare.

FIXTURES

Sunday 21st March

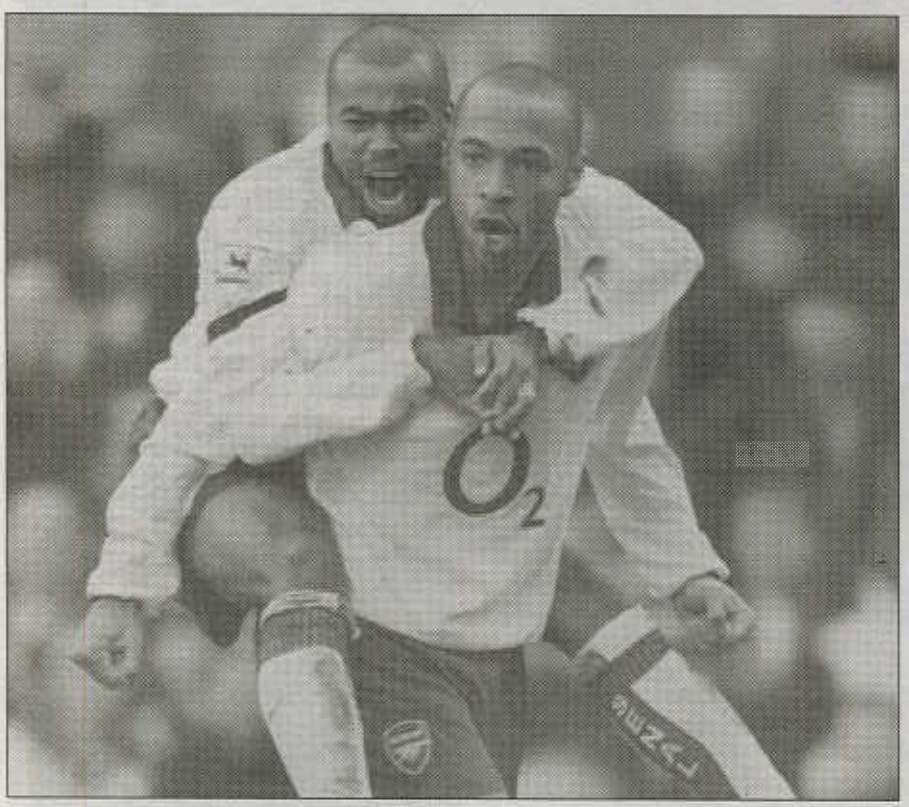
Bologna	vs	Brescia
Ancona	vs	Inter
Udinese	vs	Juventus
Milan	vs	Parma
Lecce	vs	Perugia
Modena	vs	Reggina
Lazio	vs	Roma
Empoli	vs	Sampdoria
Chievo	vs	Siena

SERIE A

Juventus 1 AC Milan 3, Empoli 0 Lecce 0, Sampdoria 3 Bologna 2, Inter Milan 0 Chievo 0, Lazio 2 Udinese 2, Parma 2 Brescia 2, Perugia 1 Modena 1, Reggina 0 Roma 0, Siena 3 Ancona 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	**25**	**20**	**4**	**1**	**50**	**15**	**64**
Roma	25	17	6	2	55	11	57
Juventus	25	17	4	4	51	30	55
Lazio	24	12	5	7	35	25	41
Parma	25	11	8	6	37	34	41
Udinese	25	10	8	7	31	28	38
Inter Milan	25	10	7	8	40	27	37
Sampdoria	25	9	9	7	32	31	36
Chievo	25	8	7	10	25	27	31
Brescia	25	6	10	9	37	41	28
Lecce	25	7	6	12	28	39	27
Siena	25	6	8	11	31	38	26
Bologna	24	6	7	11	27	36	25
Modena	25	5	10	10	21	32	25
Reggina	25	4	12	9	20	34	24
Empoli	25	5	7	13	18	39	22
Perugia	25	2	13	10	31	44	19
Ancona	25	0	7	18	11	49	7

ENGLISH



Arsenal's Ashley Cole (left) jumps onto Thierry Henry to celebrate Arsenal's opening goal against Blackburn.

BLACKBURN 0
ARSENAL 2

Blackburn did the double over Arsenal last season but the boot was on the other foot this time as Arsene Wenger's side secured their second win over the Lancashire side to maintain their nine-point lead.

French striker Thierry Henry thought he had scored a cheeky goal after 25 minutes but it was ruled out for raising his foot to steal the ball as goalkeeper Brad Friedel prepared to take a drop kick.

There was no doubt about Henry's 57th-minute free kick, however, which he curled over the wall and beyond the diving goalkeeper.

Arsenal never looked in danger of conceding and made sure of the points three minutes from time when Robert Pires scored after Gilberto's shot rebounded off a post.

BOLTON 0
CHELSEA 2

Chelsea continued to keep the pressure on at the top but only after surviving a battering in the first half.

Bolton hit the post and made stand-in Chelsea goalkeeper Marco Ambrosio work hard as they dominated the first 45 minutes.

But Chelsea were much better after the break and secured their 11th away league win with a neat volley by defender John Terry in the 71st minute and another close-range effort by winger Damien Duff three minutes later.

MANCHESTER CITY .4
MANCHESTER UTD .1

United's chances of retaining the premier league title all but disappeared after a heavy defeat in a derby they dominated in the first half.

Goals by Robbie Fowler and Jon Macken put City 2-0 up after 32 minutes but United pulled one back through Paul Scholes three minutes later and should have had more.

City improved after the break and made sure of the points with a goal by Trevor Sinclair (73) and a spectacular last-minute drive by Shaun Wright-Phillips.

BIRMINGHAM CITY . 0
LEICESTER CITY ...1

Leicester ended a traumatic week on a high as their first win since November lifted them out of the bottom three.

Ian Walker made several good saves as Birmingham dominated the early stages but Leicester fought back and got the vital goal after 53 minutes when Muzzy Izzet knocked the ball down for former England striker Les Ferdinand to strike his fourth goal in five games.

CHARLTON 1
M'BROUGH 0

Charlton won an entertaining game to move up to fourth in the standings.

Matt Holland lobbed Charlton into the lead after 25 minutes and both goalkeepers were kept busy throughout.

Middlesbrough played some neat football but struggled to turn it into clear chances and though they upped the pace in the last 10 minutes, Charlton held out.

EVERTON 1
PORTSMOUTH 0

Portsmouth, seeking their first away win of the season, played most of the football at Goodison Park but the game was decided by a moment of class from England striker Wayne Rooney.

Tomasz Radzinski should have scored early in the second half but made amends 12 minutes from time when he won the ball and fed Rooney, who kept his composure to drill past Shaka Hislop.

The youngster should have had a second when he shot wide soon afterwards but that was forgotten when the final whistle blew.

FULHAM 2
LEEDS UTD 0

Fulham deserved the win that left Leeds firmly rooted to the bottom of the league.

Leeds keeper Paul Robinson made a good double save to deny Mark Pembridge and Sean Davis while Barry Hayles missed a sitter as Fulham dominated.

Davis shot Fulham into a deserved lead after 71 minutes and man of the match Luis Boa Morte completed the win seven minutes from time.

SOUTHAMPTON 2
LIVERPOOL 0

New manager Paul Sturrock got off to a flying start as Southampton completed the league double over Liverpool for the first time.

It was a flattering result as the visitors looked the more dangerous side throughout but goalkeeper Antti Niemi kept Southampton in it and James Beattie then put them ahead after 51 minutes.

Michael Owen hit a post and missed a sitter before completing a miserable day in the 73rd minute when he had a weak penalty saved, leaving Kevin Phillips's deflected shot five minutes from time to settle the matter.

TOTTENHAM 1
NEWCASTLE UTD ...0

Tottenham secured a somewhat fortunate win with an Andy O'Brien own goal four minutes from time.

Newcastle had been the better side with Craig Bellamy and Alan Shearer looking dangerous, but the introduction of Stephane Dalmat for the last 10 minutes changed the game.

The Frenchman twice went close before driving in the low cross that O'Brien slid into his own net.

WOLVERHAMPTON ..0
ASTON VILLA 4

Villa ran riot against their midlands rivals, who remain in dire danger of relegation.

Villa took the lead after seven minutes when Thomas Hitzlsperger rifled home a left-foot drive and made it 2-0 in the 18th with an Olof Mellberg header.

Juan Pablo Angel got the third after 24 minutes and the Colombian striker completed the rout on the hour after Wolves's Romanian striker Ioan Ganea had a penalty saved by Thomas Sorensen.

Chelsea's John Terry celebrates his

FIXTURES

Saturday 27th March

Arsenal	v	Man Utd
Birmingham	v	Leeds
Blackburn	v	Portsmouth
Bolton	v	Newcastle
Charlton	v	Aston Vill
Chelsea	v	Wolverhampton
Everton	v	Middlesbrough
Leicester	v	Liverpool
Man City	v	Fulham
Southampton	v	Tottenham

PREMIER LEAGUE

Birmingham City 0 Leicester City 1, Blackburn 0 Arsenal 2, Bolton 0 Chelsea 2, Charlton 1 Middlesbrough 0, Everton 1 Portsmouth 0, Fulham 2 Leeds Utd 0, Manchester City 4 Manchester Utd 1, Southampton 2 Liverpool 0, Tottenham 1 Newcastle Utd 0, Wolverhampton 0 Aston Villa 4.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	28	21	7	0	55	18	70
Chelsea	28	19	4	5	50	21	61
Man Utd	28	18	4	6	52	29	58
Charlton	28	12	7	9	39	34	43
Newcastle	28	10	12	6	38	29	42
Birmingham	28	11	9	8	30	30	42
Aston Villa	28	11	7	10	36	32	40
Liverpool	27	10	9	8	38	31	39
Fulham	28	11	6	11	41	38	39
Tottenham	28	11	4	13	40	43	37
Southampton	28	9	9	10	29	27	36
Middlesbrough	28	9	7	12	29	35	34
Bolton	28	8	10	10	32	44	34
Everton	28	8	8	12	34	39	32
Man City	28	7	9	12	40	40	30
Blackburn	28	7	7	14	39	46	28
Leicester	28	5	11	12	38	51	26
Portsmouth	27	6	6	15	29	41	24
Wolverhampton	28	5	9	14	24	56	24
Leeds	28	5	7	16	26	55	22

FIRST DIVISION

Bradford 0 Wigan 0, Cardiff 2 Norwich 1, Coventry 4 Burnley 0, Crewe 1 West Bromwich 2, Derby 1 Rotherham 0, Ipswich 1 Millwall 3, Notts Forest 3 Crystal Palace 2, Preston 0 Gillingham 0, Reading 0 Stoke 0, Sunderland 2 West Ham 0, Walsall 1 Wimbledon 0, Watford 0 Sheffield Utd 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norwich	35	19	10	6	54	30	67
West Brom	36	19	10	7	51	31	67
Wigan	35	15	13	7	48	35	58
Sheff Utd	35	17	7	11	52	41	58
West Ham	36	14	15	7	51	34	57
Millwall	35	15	11	9	44	34	56
Sunderland	33	15	10	8	46	34	55
Reading	36	15	9	12	44	47	54
Ipswich	36	15	8	13	64	60	53
Coventry	36	13	13	10	48	39	52
Preston	36	14	10	12	53	46	52
Crystal Palace	36	14	9	13	57	53	51
Stoke	35	14	9	12	49	46	51
Cardiff	35	13	10	12	55	44	49
Crewe	35	12	8	15	44	48	44
Notts Forest	36	10	11	15	45	47	41
Rotherham	35	10	11	14	40	48	41
Walsall	36	10	11	15	37	47	41
Gillingham	34	11	8	15	35	46	41
Watford	36	10	10	16	40	51	40
Burnley	36	9	13	14	47	60	40
Derby	35	9	11	15	36	54	38
Bradford	37	9	6	22	31	52	33
Wimbledon	35	5	3	27	28	72	18

SECOND DIVISION

Bristol City 1 Rushden & Diamonds 0, Brentford 0 Stockport 2, Grimsby 1 Bournemouth 1, Hartlepool 1 QPR 4, Luton 3 Blackpool 2, Oldham 0 Colchester 0, Peterborough 6 Wrexham 1, Plymouth 2 Swindon 1, Port Vale 1 Brighton 1, Sheffield Wed 2 Barnsley 1, Tranmere 2 Chesterfield 3, Wycombe 1 Notts County 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plymouth	36	21	10	5	72	32	73
Bristol City	36	19	11	6	49	27	68
QPR	35	18	12	5	64	34	66
Swindon	35	17	9	9	57	42	60
Brighton	36	16	9	11	52	37	57
Luton	34	15	11	8	55	46	56
Hartlepool	35	14	11	10	55	46	53
Bournemouth	35	14	11	10	43	37	53
Port Vale	35	15	7	13	57	51	52
Wrexham	35	15	6	14	41	44	51
Barnsley	36	12	13	11	42	44	49
Sheff Wed	36	12	12	12	41	46	48
Colchester	34	12	9	13	35	44	45
Rushden & D'monds	36	12	8	16	53	55	44
Blackpool	35	12	8	15	42	49	44
Tranmere	35	9	14	12	40	51	41
Chesterfield	35	10	10	15	37	53	40
Grimsby	36	10	10	16	45	64	40
Oldham	35	8	15	12	48	49	39
Peterborough	36	9	12	15	45	48	39
Notts County	36	9	9	18	41	58	36
Stockport	36	7	14	15	47	60	35

Spanish Primera Liga

The width of the post and the reflexes of Iker Casillas were all that saved Real Madrid from defeat as they were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw with Real Zaragoza at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid took the lead on 27 minutes when Javier Portillo, given a rare chance to start, headed home Juanfran's cross unopposed with the Zaragoza defence AWOL.

However, Madrid's joy only lasted four minutes as Delio Toledo snuck in completely unmarked to equalise.

Valencia reduced Real's lead at the top to just four points after disposing of Celta Vigo 0-2.

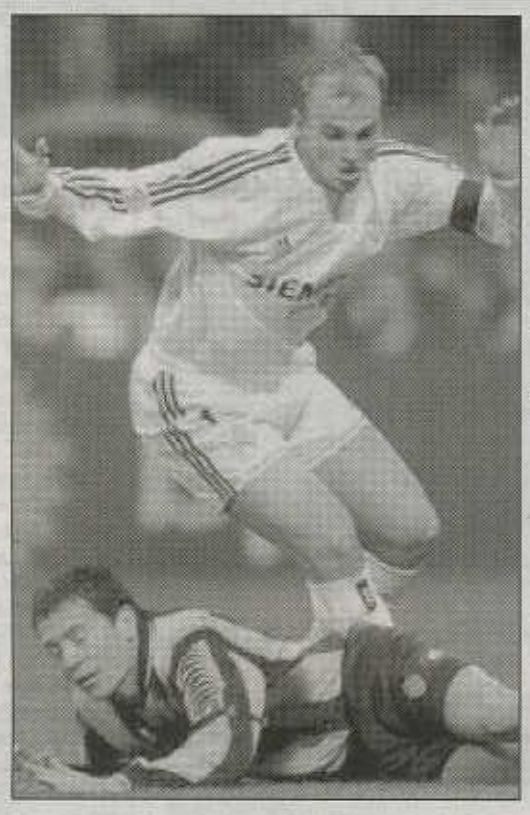
Francisco Rufete bagged a double for Valencia, the first coming seven minutes from half-time before sealing the points late on with a 90th minute strike.

Real Mallorca stunned Deportivo La Coruna 4-2 at San Moix, and issued a potentially fatal blow to their opponents' Primera Liga title challenge.

Fernando Correa put Mallorca ahead just six minutes in but Pedro Munitis brought it level on 22.

Mallorca restored their lead on 35 minutes through a header from defender Ivan Ramis.

Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o made it 3-1 on 57 minutes and though Djalminha gave the visitors hope nine minutes from time, Jesus Perera struck on 83 to make victory safe.



Zaragoza's Galleti falls at the feet of of Real Madrid's Esteban Cobo.

Barcelona continued their recent resurgence by winning 2-0 at Murcia to move above Depor into third spot in the table.

Argentinean Javier Saviola opened the scoring just four minutes in and the mercurial Ronaldinho made the points safe for the visitors with a second an hour later.

Salva Ballesta netted deep into stoppage-time to give Malaga a key 2-1 victory against fellow European hopefuls Athletic Bilbao.

Salva turned the ball home from close range in the fourth minute of time added on to steal the points after an entertaining encounter.

Aitor Larrazabal had put Bilbao ahead on 38 minutes with a controversial penalty, and Jose Luque levelled two minutes after the break.

Real Betis were held to a 1-1 draw at home by fellow European candidates Osasuna.

All seemed to be going well for Betis, looking to bounce back from last weekend's surprise 1-0 loss to struggling Albacete, when Benjamin gave them the lead three minutes before the break.

But Osasuna battled back and earned a point when Australian striker John Aloisi equalised deep into first-half injury time.

Sevilla's surge towards the top six was slowed by Real Valladolid, who claimed a second successive valuable win.

Goals in the second half from Jonathan Martin and Jesus Sanchez, who netted a penalty, earned the home side a victory which pulls them further clear of the relegation zone.

Villarreal rounded off an impressive week by coming from behind to beat Albacete 2-1 with goals from Fabricio Colloccini and Sonny Anderson.

Antonio Pacheco gave Albacete an early lead when he capitalised on a hesitant home defence to lash the ball under Jose Reina's crossbar and into the net.

But Coloccini (49) and Anderson (57) both struck early in the second half to turn things round.

Espanyol's survival bid was dented on after they were beaten 1-0 at home by Racing Santander.

The Catalan side began the day with a chance of escaping the relegation zone if other results went their way. But such bright hopes were wrecked as Fernando Moran gave Racing a 1-0 win.

Real Sociedad eased their relegation worries with a narrow 2-1 victory over Atletico Madrid.

The opening goal arrived in the 32nd minute from the penalty spot with Valeri Karpin scoring for Sociedad after Matias Lequi felled Darko Kovacevic.

Atletico then gifted their hosts a second goal when Diego Simeone turned Karpin's low shot into his own net.

Veljko Paunovic, a half-time sub, eventually reduced arrears 19 minutes from the end with an unstoppable shot from distance.

FIXTURES

Sunday 21st March

Racing	vs	Celta
Zaragoza	vs	Espanyol
Athletic	vs	R Madrid
Sevilla	vs	Málaga
Albacete	vs	Valladolid
Osasuna	vs	Villarreal
Atlético	vs	Betis
Barcelona	vs	R Sociedad
Deportivo	vs	Murcia
Valencia	vs	Mallorca

Real Madrid 1 Real Zaragoza 1, Real Sociedad 2 Atletico Madrid 1, Espanyol 0 Santander 1, Malaga 2 Athletic Bilbao 1, Mallorca 4 Deportivo 2, Murcia 0 Barcelona 2, Real Betis 1 Osasuna 1, Valladolid 2 Sevilla 0, Villarreal 2 Albacete 1, Celta Vigo 0 Valencia 2.

		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	**Real Madrid**	**28**	**18**	**7**	**3**	**56**	**31**	**61**
2	Valencia	28	17	6	5	52	20	57
3	Barcelona	28	15	7	6	47	32	52
4	Deportivo	28	15	5	8	45	27	50
5	Atlético	28	11	8	9	34	34	41
6	Athletic	28	11	8	9	35	35	41
7	Osasuna	28	9	13	6	28	24	40
8	Villarreal	28	11	6	11	38	38	39
9	Sevilla	28	10	8	10	38	30	38
10	Betis	28	9	11	8	35	30	38
11	Málaga	28	12	2	14	38	42	38
12	Racing	28	10	7	11	35	40	36
13	Valladolid	28	9	8	11	35	39	35
14	Real Sociedad	28	9	8	11	33	39	35
15	Zaragoza	28	9	6	13	31	38	33
16	Albacete	28	9	5	14	27	36	32
17	Mallorca	28	9	5	14	35	49	32
18	Celta	28	6	9	13	37	54	27
19	Espanyol	28	8	2	18	31	50	26
20	Murcia	28	2	11	15	23	45	17

German Bundesliga

Werder Bremen went nine points clear at the top of the Bundesliga with a 3-2 defeat of Cologne. At one stage, Bremen were leading 3-0 against 10-man Cologne but they had to withstand a brave fight back from the bottom club.

Two goals from Brazilian striker Ailton and one from French playmaker Johan Micoud set up Werder but bottom club Cologne responded after the interval with efforts from defender Oliver Schroeder and midfielder Dirk Lottner before having midfielder Alexander Voigt sent off for a second booking.

Bayern Munich suffered a blow to their title hopes as they were held to a 3-3 draw by Hansa Rostock.

Bayern stormed into a 2-0 lead inside 10 minutes thanks to goals from midfielder Jens Jeremies and striker Roy Makaay.

The visitors fought back after the break with goals from strikers Martin Max and Magnus Arvidsson and midfielder Thomas Rasmussen to take a 3-2 lead.

Bayern, in their first outing since being knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid, needed a Makaay penalty in the 76th minute to escape defeat.

Leverkusen's Juan (left) fights for the ball with Wolfsburg's Andres D'Alessandro.

With 10 matches to play Werder look to be in total command in what looks to be a two-horse race for the Bundesliga crown.

Bayer Leverkusen established a 3-1 lead over Wolfsburg by halftime before winning 4-2 at the BayArena.

Dimitar Berbatov scored with the game just 30 seconds old before Marko Babic made it 2-0 after 13 minutes. Marko Topic reduced arrears eight minutes later but Bernd Schneider restored the two-goal lead for Bayer.

In the second period Brazilian Franca made it 4-1 before Diego Klimowicz got a consolation for Wolfsburg.

Goals from Christian Rahn and Bernardo Romeo gave Hamburg a 2-0 win over nine-man Hertha Berlin, whose relegation plight worsened with the sendings-off of Dick van Burik and Arne Friedrich.

Borussia Dortmund suffered a setback in their bid for a place in the UEFA Cup and remain seventh after a 2-2 draw with Freiburg.

Freiburg's Roda Antar gave his side an early lead at home to Dortmund, who replied before the interval through Dede.

After the break, Dortmund took the lead through a Lars Hermel own goal only for Levan Tskitishvili to restore parity for Freiburg.

Eintracht left the relegation zone by inflicting a 3-0 defeat on Schalke, their first loss in four months.

The home side built their victory after the break with goals from striker Ioannis Amanatidis and midfielders Ervin Skela and Alexander Schur.

In a relegation six-pointer, a second-half goal from Marian Hristov gave Kaiserslautern three precious points against Hannover, whose new coach Ewald Lienen was making his debut on the bench.

Aleksandr Knavs was sent off for Lautern but the Red Devils survived for a 0-1 win.

Stuttgart kept alive their hopes of returning to the Champions League next season with a 2-0 victory over troubled TSV 1860 Munich.

Stuttgart set up their win with first-half goals in quick succession from midfielder Zvonimir Soldo and striker Marco Streller.

Surprise package Bochum needed an own goal from defender Sladan Asanin with two minutes left to beat strugglers Borussia Moenchengladbach 1-0.

Bochum stay in fourth and on track for the UEFA Cup while Moenchengladbach slide to fourth from bottom in the 18-strong league.

FIXTURES

Saturday 27ST March 2004

Hansa Rostock	vs	Wolfsburg
Hamburg SV	vs	Kaiserslautern
B.Munich	vs	M.gladbach
B.Leverkusen	vs	Hertha Berlin
VFB Stuttgart	vs	Werder Bremen
Freiburg	vs	FC Cologne
E.Frankfurt	vs	1860 Munich
Hannover	vs	B.Dortmund
Bochum	vs	Schalke

Bayer Leverkusen 4 Wolfsburg 2, Bayern Munich 3 Hansa Rostock 3, Eintracht Frankfurt 3 Schalke 0, Hamburg 2 Hertha Berlin 0, Hannover 0 Kaiserslautern 1, Freiburg 2 Borussia Dortmund 2, Werder Bremen 3 Cologne 2, Bochum 1 Moenchengladbach 0, Stuttgart 2 1860 Munich 0.

		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	**Bremen**	**24**	**18**	**4**	**2**	**59**	**23**	**58**
2	Bayern	24	14	7	3	53	26	49
3	Stuttgart	24	13	7	4	31	10	46
4	Bochum	24	11	8	5	38	25	41
5	Leverkusen	24	11	6	7	44	33	39
6	Schalke	24	9	9	6	29	26	36
7	Dortmund	24	10	5	9	38	34	35
8	Hamburg	24	9	6	9	33	38	33
9	Hansa	24	8	7	9	38	35	31
10	Wolfsburg	24	10	1	13	44	46	31
11	Freiburg	24	8	5	11	33	51	29
12	Kaiserslautern	24	9	3	12	25	35	27
13	Eintracht	24	7	5	12	28	34	26
14	1860 Munich	24	7	5	12	24	37	26
15	Moen/ngladbach	24	6	6	12	24	34	24
16	Hannover	24	6	6	12	38	52	24
17	Hertha	24	5	8	11	24	45	23
18	Köln	24	4	4	16	19	38	16

WORLD

Scottish Premier League

Rangers defender Frank de Boer heads clear from Hearts' Andy Webster.

Celtic saviour Henrik Larsson came off the bench to maintain their unbeaten home record and their 16-point lead over Rangers as they drew 1-1 with Motherwell.

Terry Butcher's talented youngsters, smarting from a defeat to Inverness, threatened to succeed where the likes of Barcelona, Juventus, Bayern Munich, Porto, Valencia, Lyon and Liverpool had failed when they took the lead through Derek Adams.

But Larsson rescued a depleted young Celtic side, who were missing the likes of Chris Sutton, Alan Thompson, Neil Lennon, Didier Agathe, Robert Douglas, Jackie McNamara and John Hartson, although he could not extend their 25-match winning run in the SPL.

Derek Adams had given Well the lead on 26 minutes when he drove home right-footed after good work from Keith Lasley.

But Larsson was introduced 12 minutes after the interval and popped up in the 69th minute to force the ball home and secure his side a hard-earned point.

Dennis Wyness finally ended Hearts' home goal drought against Rangers to earn a share of the points in a 1-1 draw at Tynecastle.

The Light Blues had taken the lead on 53 minutes through Socceroo international and Rangers skipper Craig Moore from the penalty spot after Peter Lovenkrands was brought down in the box by Robbie Neilson.

But substitute Wyness grabbed a point when he netted Hearts' first home SPL goal against the Ibrox club since September 2001.

Leigh Hinds answered Aberdeen manager Steve Paterson's call for more goals but still couldn't fire the Dons closer to the SPL top six after a 1-1 draw at Dundee.

The former Clyde man's 61st-minute strike cancelled out Mark Fotheringham's spectacular first-half opener for Dundee, who in truth were second best for long spells.

But Aberdeen, who dominated for long spells, were left to rue a series of missed opportunities.

Luckless Partick Thistle paid dearly for missing a series of chances against Dundee United in a game that ended 1-1.

The Firhill men dominated most of the game and missed several opportunities to take the lead before a David Rowson goal in the 65th minute eventually broke the deadlock.

The Jags were stunned only three minutes later, however, when a spectacular Barry Robson free-kick from 30 yards found the postage stamp.

It was cruel fortune for the relegation-bound Jags who also hit the woodwork on several occasions and who deserved so much more for their efforts.

Dundee 1 Aberdeen 1, Hearts 1 Rangers 1, Partick Thistle 1 Dundee Utd 1, Celtic 1 Motherwell 1.

League Cup Final
Hibernian 0 Livingston 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Celtic	**27**	**25**	**2**	**0**	**87**	**14**	**77**
2Rangers	27	19	4	4	53	22	61
3Hearts	28	14	7	7	40	30	49
4Dunfermline	26	10	8	8	29	35	38
5Motherwell	27	10	7	10	32	31	37
6Dundee United	27	8	7	12	28	42	31
7Dundee	27	7	8	12	33	41	29
8Livingston	26	7	8	11	30	38	29
9Aberdeen	28	7	7	14	31	44	28
10Hibernian	26	7	7	12	24	40	28
11Kilmarnock	27	8	4	15	33	56	28
12Partick	28	3	5	20	28	55	14

Greek Ethinki Katigoria

Action from the heated derby between AEK Athens & Olympiakos.

Halkidona 1-0 Iraklis, Kallithea 0-1 PAOK, Panionios 0-1 Panathinaikos Olympiacos 0-1AEK, Aris 1-1 Ionikos

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Panathinaikos	23	18	4	1	45	13	58
2Olympiacos	23	18	2	3	54	15	56
3PAOK	23	15	5	3	38	17	50
4Egaleo	23	12	6	5	31	18	42
5Halkidona	23	12	5	6	34	26	41
6AEK	23	12	5	6	42	22	41
7Panionios	23	8	9	6	29	22	33
8Iraklis	23	9	5	9	28	32	32
9Xanthi	23	7	6	10	24	32	27
10OFI	23	7	5	11	24	36	26
11Ionikos	23	6	5	12	25	32	23
12Aris	23	5	5	13	18	32	20
13Paniliakos	23	3	6	14	25	47	15
14Kallithea	23	2	9	12	24	36	15
15Akratitos	23	3	5	15	23	59	14
16Proodeftiki	23	2	8	13	15	40	14

Turkish Super League

Rizespor 1-2 Gaziantepspor, Samsunspor 3-1 Diyarbakirspor, Besiktas 5-3 Elazigspor, Ankaragücü 1-2 Trabzonspor, Bursaspor 3-2 Malatyaspor, Denizlispor 2-0 Istanbulspor, Akcaabat 2-1 Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe 5-2 Konyaspor

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Fenerbahçe	**25**	**17**	**6**	**2**	**60**	**29**	**57**
2Besiktas	25	16	6	3	53	29	54
3Trabzonspor	25	15	5	5	41	28	50
4Denizlispor	25	14	3	8	40	27	45
5Gaziantepspor	25	13	3	9	39	37	42
6Galatasaray	25	11	8	6	39	32	41
7Diyarbakirspor	25	10	7	8	37	33	37
8Samsunspor	25	10	6	9	37	36	36
9Malatyaspor	25	8	9	8	33	27	33
10Gençlerbirligi	24	9	4	11	40	34	31
11Ankaragücü	25	8	6	11	34	40	30
12Konyaspor	25	6	11	8	37	42	29
13Rizespor	25	8	3	14	26	43	27
14Istanbulspor	25	7	5	13	33	37	26
15Akcaabat	25	6	8	11	30	39	26
16Bursaspor	25	4	9	12	21	32	21
17Elazigspor	25	5	6	14	33	58	21
18Adanaspor	24	3	3	18	23	53	12

Dutch Eredivisie

Ajax look set to regain the Eredivisie title after another disappointing defeat for current champions PSV Eindhoven.

Two recent defeats, by Heerenveen and Utrecht, for Ajax had given PSV a window of opportunity they had failed to take with the Eindhoven club losing two matches themselves.

PSV were made to rue that profligacy when they allowed Ajax to extend that lead to nine points by beating Roda JC 4-2 at the Amsterdam Arena.

PSV earlier had tasted defeat at their home Philipsstadion by Feyenoord 0-1 who had Ebi Smolarek's 13th-minute goal to thank for their victory.

Thomas Buffel picked out Smolarek on the edge of the area and the Polish striker unleashed a powerful shot into the back of the net.

In Amsterdam, first-half goals from Nicolae Mieta (26) and Yannis Anastasiou put Ajax in the ascendancy but Iwan Redan reduced arrears for the visitors from Kerkrade in first-half stoppage time.

There was still time for play to restart and for Anastasiou to bag a second to make the scores 3-1 at the interval.

When the game resumed, Mark Luijpers immediately brought the score back to 3-2.

With eight minutes remaining Steven Pienaar made it 4-2 for Ajax.

AZ Alkmaar's quest for European football took a hit with a 2-1 defeat at home to Utrecht.

Michael Buskermolen gave the high-fliers from Alkmaar the lead early in the second half.

However, Amstel Cup holders Utrecht hit back to take the points with goals from Hans van der Haar (58) and Sandro Calabro (83).

RKC Waalwijk and Willem II had to settle for a 1-1 draw.

Heerenveen continued its charge up the ladder thanks to Jesper Hakansson's late winner in a 2-1 victory over Volendam.

Striker Gerald Sibon, making his comeback after a long injury layoff, opened the scoring after seven minutes.

With 19 minutes remaining Rowin van Zaanen equalised for second-bottom Volendam but Dane Jesper Hakansson sealed Heerenveen's victory eight minutes from time.

Zwolle were unceremoniously given another shove towards relegation as they lost 3-1 to NAC Breda.

Ali Boussaboun and Nourdin Boukhari gave NAC a two-goal lead inside the game's first quarter, their goals coming after 18 and 22 minutes, and although Jasar Takak pulled one back for Zwolle in the 25th minute, they continued to trail at the break.

Anouar Diba settled the outcome with NAC's third after 61 minutes.

An early Sammy Youssouf strike on seven minutes proved enough for mid-table RBC Roosendaal to take the points against strugglers Groningen in a 1-0 victory.

RBC continued to push forward and Youssouf almost turned provider for Ikedia 10 minutes after the goal but there were no more goals in the game.

NEC Nijmegen pulled further away from the relegation zone with a convincing 2-5 win at Twente Enschede.

Although Twente's Adil Ramzi netted a 13th-minute equaliser after Rob Wielaert had opened the scoring for NEC the visitors were never behind in the match.

Two goals in four second-half minutes from Peter Wisgerhof and Zico Tumba put NEC 3-1 ahead before substitute Jeffrey De Visscher reduced arrears (68).

Two goals in the last three minutes from substitutes Fabian De Freitas and Rene van Rijswijk sealed the points for Nijmegen.

Ruud Knol's late penalty was enough for Vitesse Arnhem to pull within three points of safety and secure a crucial 1-0 victory over ADO Den Haag.

Waalwijk 1-1 Willem II, Vitesse 1-0 Den Haag, Ajax 4-2 Roda, Alkmaar 1-2 Utrecht, PSV 0-1 Feyenoord, Heerenveen 2-1 Volendam, NAC 3-1 Zwolle, Roosendaal 1-0 Groningen, Twente 2-5 NEC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Ajax	**25**	**20**	**1**	**4**	**57**	**25**	**61**
2PSV	25	16	4	5	63	22	52
3Feyenoord	25	13	7	5	46	33	46
4Alkmaar	25	14	3	8	48	30	45
5Heerenveen	25	13	5	7	38	31	44
6Twente	25	12	2	11	45	41	38
7Roda	25	10	8	7	42	31	38
8Willem II	25	10	8	7	36	35	38
9Roosendaal	25	10	7	8	29	30	37
10NAC	25	9	7	9	40	36	34
11Utrecht	25	9	6	10	30	36	33
12Waalwijk	25	8	7	10	33	30	31
13NEC	25	9	1	15	34	41	28
14Groningen	25	7	6	12	29	38	27
15Den Haag	25	6	5	14	23	47	23
16Vitesse	25	3	11	11	27	39	20
17Volendam	25	4	5	16	21	61	17
18Zwolle	25	2	7	16	16	51	13

Belgian First Division

Nenad Jestrovic's 89th-minute penalty complete a dramatic comeback by Anderlecht in their home match with Charleroi.

The Brussels outfit eventually won 3-2 thanks to Jestrovic's spot kick, but has previously trailed 2-0 after first-half goals by Frank Defays (12) and Adekamni Olufade (29).

Oleg Iachtchouck then scored twice in six second-half minutes - his first on 63 - to draw his side back level before a composed Jestrovic slotted home a late spot kick.

Anderlecht have put a strangle-hold on this year's Belgian First Division and have taken the league by storm.

It looks as though no-one will stop the side as it has developed a 12 point gap between second placed Club Brugge.

Club Brugges held off a strong finish by hosts Westerlo for a 3-2 win to stay second in the Belgian first division.

Bruges had gone 3-0 up after 58 minutes but were forced to spend the final quarter defending as the home team desperately battled for their 13th win of the season.

Talented Midfielder Tim Smolders put Bruges ahead after just two minutes and Norwegian striker Bengt Saeternes made it 3-0 with goals in the 38th and 58th minutes.

However, the home side dominated the final stages, Dosin Dosunmu pulling one back in the 68th minute before Toni Brogno scored a second one minute from time.

Bruges, now on 52 points, move two clear of third-placed Standard Liege, who drew 0-0 at Ghent.

Excelsior Mouscron stay fourth after a disappointing 1-1 draw at St Truidense, for whom Kris Buvens' 85th minute strike cancelled out an early Luigi Pieroni strike.

Australian international faired well in the match that saw many cautions given out by the man in the middle.

Most of the other action surrounded teams at the other end of the table.

Bottom club Antwerp - who had Stefan Leleu dismissed for two booking 13 minutes from time - wasted a host of chances in the goalless draw at home to fellow strugglers Mons.

Mons also finished a man down after Olivier Berquemanne's straight red in the 83rd minute.

Laurent Delorge netted an 80th minute winner as Lierse eased their drop fears with a fine 1-0 win at La Louviere.

It was a game of two halves at Heusden as the hosts blew a 2-0 lead to go down 2-3 at the hands of Lokeren.

Meanwhile, mid-table Beveren and Germinal Beerschot drew 0-0.

In what was described as a rather dull and boring match, the two-sides had their chances in scoring a goalbut failed to do that thus ending the match scoreless.

Heusden 2 Lokeren 3, Antwerp 0 Mons 0, Sint-Truiden 1 Mouscron 1, Beveren 0 Germinal Beerschot 0, Anderlecht 3 Charleroi 2, La Louviere 0 Lierse 1, Gent 0 Standard 0, Cercle Brugge 0 Genk 0, Westerlo 2 Club Brugge 3.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Anderlecht	25	21	2	2	60	21	65
2Club Brugge	26	16	4	6	55	27	52
3Standard	26	14	8	4	53	23	50
4Mouscron	25	12	10	3	49	31	46
5Westerlo	26	12	8	6	40	31	44
6Genk	26	12	7	7	46	32	43
7Germinal Beerschot	26	8	11	7	22	25	35
8Beveren	26	10	3	13	35	41	33
9Sint-Truiden	26	8	9	9	29	36	33
10AA Gent	26	6	11	9	24	27	29
11La Louvière	26	6	11	9	31	36	29
12Lokeren	26	7	7	12	34	45	28
13Mons	26	6	10	10	24	32	28
14Lierse	26	5	12	9	23	32	27
15Cercle Brugge	26	5	11	10	20	42	26
16Charleroi	26	5	7	14	25	36	22
17Heusden	25	4	6	15	24	45	18
18Antwerp	25	4	5	16	17	49	17

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE AND UEFA WRAP

Javier Saviola getting his marching orders against Celtic in their UEFA Cup clash last week.

Champions League Quarter-finals:

FC Porto v Lyon (March 23/April 7)
Real Madrid v Monaco (March 24/April 6)
Chelsea v Arsenal (March 24/April 6)
AC Milan v Deportivo la Coruna (March 23/April 7)
** The first-named team plays the first leg at home.*

Semi-finals:

Real Madrid/Monaco v Chelsea/Arsenal
FC Porto/Lyon v AC Milan/Deportivo la Coruna
** First legs to take place on April 20/21, second legs on May 4/5.*

Holders to face Deportivo

Holders AC Milan have been paired with RC Deportivo La Coruña after today's draw for the UEFA Champions League quarter-finals in Nyon, Switzerland, while there will also be a mouthwatering all-English duel.

Milan, the defending champions, are targeting their seventh success in Europe's most prestigious club competition.

Their Spanish opponents, Deportivo, were this week the conquerors of Juventus, the team Milan beat on penalties in last year's final. In the all-Premiership encounter, Arsenal FC will do battle with London rivals Chelsea FC, guaranteeing an English side in the last four.

In the remaining two ties, nine-times winners Real Madrid CF will face Ligue 1 leaders AS Monaco FC, while FC Porto, the UEFA Cup holders, will take on Olympique Lyonnais, the French champions.

The draw was also made for the semi-finals, with teams learning who their potential opponents will be should they reach the last four.

The quarter-final ties will be played over two legs, starting on 23/24 March and concluding a fortnight later. The winners will progress to the semi-finals, with the two legs scheduled for 20/21 April and 4/5 May.

The final will take place at the Arena AufSchalke in Gelsenkirchen, Germany on Wednesday 26 May.

UEFA CUP

Fourth-Round First Leg

Bordeaux (France) 3 Club Bruges (Belgium) 1
AJ Auxerre (France) 1 PSV Eindhoven (Netherlands) 1
Genclerbirligi (Turkey) 1 Valencia (Spain) 0
Newcastle United (England) 4 Real Mallorca (Spain) 1
Liverpool (England) 1 Marseille (France) 1
Benfica (Portugal) 0 Inter Milan (Italy) 0
Celtic (Scotland) 1 Barcelona (Spain) 0
Villarreal (Spain) 2 AS Roma (Italy) 0
** Second Leg matches to be played on March 25.*

Celtic spoil Barça's winning streak

Celtic FC take a slender 1-0 lead into the return leg of their fourth round UEFA Cup tie with FC Barcelona after an absorbing fixture. A goal by Alan Thompson on 59 minutes was decisive, but by that stage three players had received red cards - two for the visitors, and two during half-time.

Barcelona forced two early corners, and Oleguer shot over, but it was Celtic who dominated the first 20 minutes. Didier Agathe raced down and his deep centre was cleared by Carles Puyol at the expense of a corner. Thompson swung it in left-footed but Balde's header was blocked.

Having seen off the pressure Barcelona then started to make progress into Celtic territory and on 22 minutes a good passing movement culminated in a shot from Phillip Cocu that drifted just wide of the left upright. Their one-touch passing movements were a joy to behold and two minutes later Saviola had a great opportunity, but with only Robert Douglas to beat his shot screwed wide. Soon after Ronaldinho's effort met a similar fate.

A scuffle erupted in the tunnel at half-time and as a result Celtic goalkeeper Douglas and Barcelona midfield player Motta were sent-off. It meant that O'Neill had to throw 18-year-old custodian David Marshall - whose senior career had not yet passed 100 minutes before tonight - into the fray in place of Beattie.

Saviola had an early opportunity to test the rookie as on 47 minutes he won a race with Jackie McNamara into the box but dragged his shot wide of Marshall. It proved to be the last contribution from the Argentinian who was given a red card (Photo shown above) a minute later after aiming an apparent kick at Thompson.

By now Barcelona were happy to leave Glasgow with a narrow defeat following a tough encounter, for a return on 25 March for which there will be four suspensions: Douglas and Balde for Celtic, Motta and Saviola for the Camp Nou side.

French Ligue 1

Monaco's lead at the top of Ligue 1 was reduced to two points as the Champions League quarter-finalists were held to a goalless draw at UEFA Cup contenders AJ Auxerre.

With ten games remaining until the end of the season, Monaco are on 59 points. Lyon, who also reached the Champions League last eight midweek, are on 57.

Lyon maintained their pursuit of leaders Monaco with a narrow 1-2 win at Sochaux.

Giovane Elber opened the scoring for the title hopefuls on three minutes when he headed home Sidney Govou's cross but Francileudo Santos levelled matters.

Edmilson's deflected free-kick re-established Lyon's lead on 65 but they were thankful for a flying save from Remi Vercoutre two minutes from time to secure the points.

Paris St Germain also continued their push for the title with a 1-0 victory over a Le Mans side who remain rock-bottom.

Danijel Ljuboja's strike 22 minutes from time enabled Les Parisians to extend their impressive unbeaten run in Ligue 1 to 16 matches, a sequence which stretches back until November 2.

Nice gave their European hopes a shot in the arm with a 3-1 home win over mid-table Rennes.

Christophe Meslin and Lilian Laslandes scored either side of half-time as the home side took a 2-0 lead but Frederic Piquionne halved the deficit to set up an entertaining final half-hour.

Pereira Everson's goal just before the end of the game secured all three points for Nice, who now sit seventh.

Nantes are also gunning for Europe, but their hopes were dented when they failed to protect a two-goal lead and had to settle for a 2-2 draw against relegation-threatened Metz.

Toifilou Maoulida made sure the visitors shared the spoils with a goal 15 minutes from the end.

Viorel Moldovan had given Nantes the lead with his eighth goal in seven games before a deflected Sylvain Armand free-kick doubled their advantage.

Metz had a lifeline five minutes after the restart thanks to Medhi Meniri's 25-yard free-kick and when Maoulida popped up on the counter-attack, they snatched a point.

Bastia collected another useful point in their quest to stay clear of the relegation zone after holding Lens to a goalless draw. l.

Mathieu Chalme's hat-trick condemned Ajaccio to a heavy 0-3 home defeat against a rampant Lille.

Chalme opened the scoring in first-half stoppage-time by lashing home from 18 yards and added goals on 61 and 68 to seal the victory.

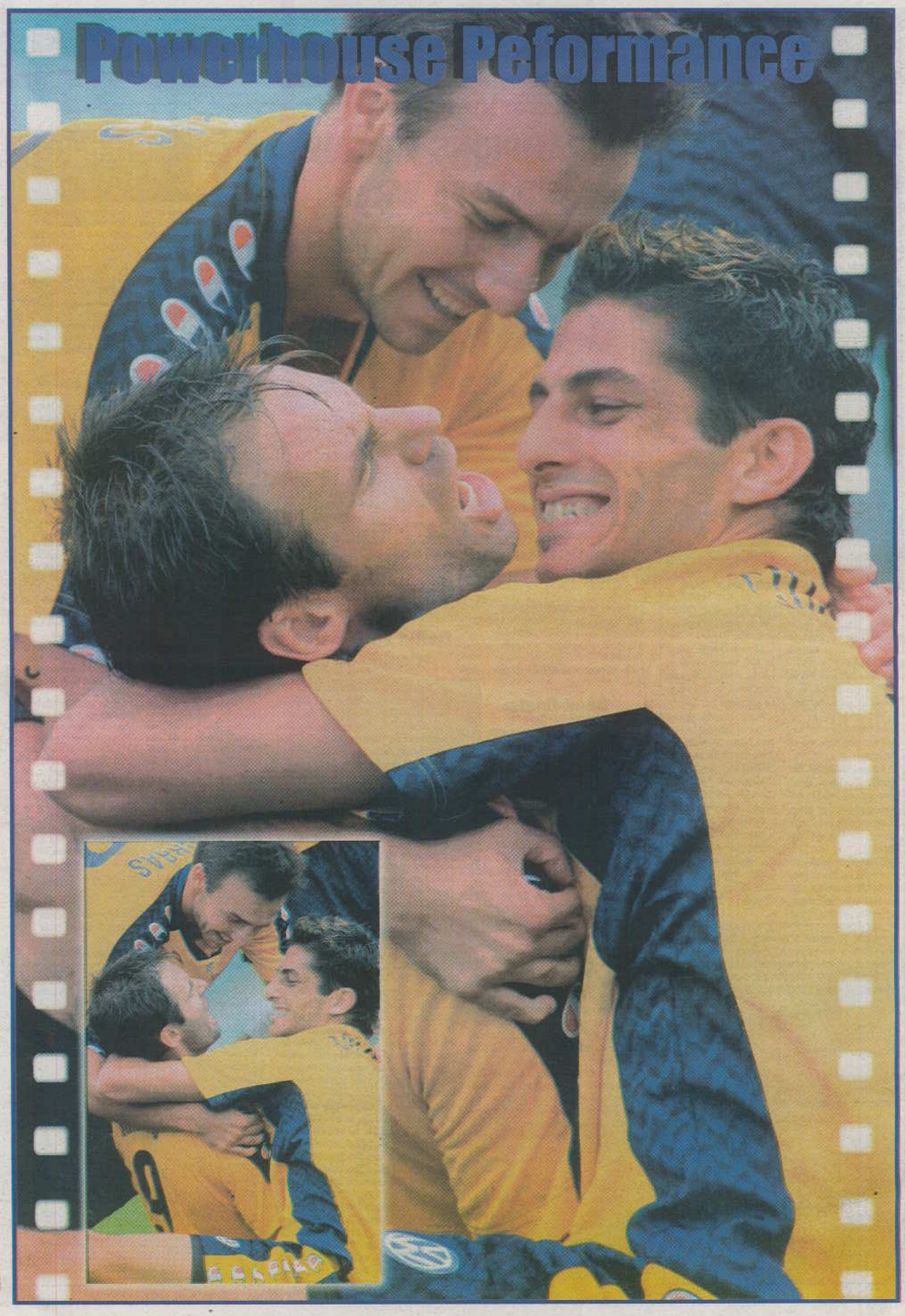
Jerome Leroy's hat-trick helped Guingamp edge a seven-goal thriller with fellow strugglers Montpellier.

The fortunes of Marseille caretaker coach Jose Anigo looked on the ascendancy after a 4-0 drubbing of ten-man Strasbourg.

Didier Drogba got the hosts off the mark after 22 minutes from the penalty spot before Steve Marlet claimed Marseille's second goal shortly before the interval.

Bordeaux suffered a 1-0 defeat at lowly Toulouse. Christophe Avrezac scored Toulouse's winning goal in the 75th minute, helping his team out of the relegation zone. Bordeaux remain 11th in the standings on 40 points.

Le Mans 0 Paris St Germain 1, Sochaux 1 Lyon 2, Lens 0 Bastia 0, Ajaccio 0 Lille 3, Nantes 2 Metz 2, Guingamp 4 Montpellier 3, Nice 3 Rennes 1, Marseille 4 Strasbourg 0, Toulouse 1 Bordeaux 0, Auxerre 0 Monaco 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1Monaco	28	17	8	3	47	19	59
2Lyon	28	17	6	5	50	21	57
3PSG	28	15	9	4	39	20	54
4Sochaux	28	14	7	7	41	31	49
5Auxerre	28	14	5	9	43	22	47
6Marseille	28	14	4	10	38	30	46
7Nantes	28	12	7	9	34	25	43
8Nice	28	10	13	5	32	25	43
9Lens	28	12	5	11	25	38	41
10Lille	28	11	7	10	32	28	40
11Bordeaux	28	11	7	10	27	28	40
12Rennes	28	8	9	11	34	34	33
13Bastia	28	8	9	11	30	36	33
14Strasbourg	28	8	8	12	39	43	32
15Toulouse	28	7	7	14	21	34	28
16Guingamp	27	8	3	16	26	44	27
17Ajaccio	28	7	6	15	23	44	27
18Metz	27	6	7	14	19	31	25
19Montpellier	28	6	4	18	32	56	22
20Mans	28	4	9	15	20	43	21

Powerhouse Peformance